THE BUDDHIST WORLD

Edited by JOHN POWERS

THE BUDDHIST WORLD

The Buddhist World joins a series of books on the world's great religions and cultures, offering a lively and up-to-date survey of Buddhist Studies for students and scholars alike. It explores regional varieties of Buddhism and core topics including buddha-nature, ritual, and pilgrimage. In addition to historical and geo-political views of Buddhism, the volume features thematic chapters on philosophical concepts such as ethics, as well as social constructs and categories such as community and family. The book also addresses lived Buddhism in its many forms, examining the ways in which modernity is reshaping traditional structures, ancient doctrines, and cosmological beliefs.

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WORLD

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John Powers

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CHRONOLOGY OF BUDDHISM

520	Bodhidharma arrives in China
530–600	Life of Dharmakīrti; flourishing of Epistemological tradition
538–597	Life of Zhiyii; development of Tiantai school
552	Buddhism enters Japan from Korea
6th century	Development of Huayan, Chan, Jingtu schools in China
574–622	Prince Shōtoku patronizes Buddhism in Japan
589–617	Chinese Sui Dynasty; Buddhism flourishes in China
617–686	Life of Wŏnhyo, founder of "unified Buddhism" in Korea
ca. 605–660	Life of Songtsen Gampo, first of Tibet's "religious kings"
618–906	Chinese Tang Dynasty; apogee of Buddhism in China
629–645	Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang travels to India
638–713	Life of Huineng; split of Chan into Northern and Southern schools
650–950	Pala dynasty in India; sponsorship of major Buddhist centers
668–918	Unified Silla Period in Korea; flourishing of Buddhism
700–800	Construction of Borobodur in Java
710–784	Nara period in Japan; establishment of Sanron, Hossō, Jōjitsu, Kusha, Ritsu, and Kegon schools
720–1200	Tantric Buddhism arises and develops in India
760	Padmasambhava arrives in Tibet; beginning of "early propagation" of Buddhism to Tibet
767	Consecration of Samye, first monastery in Tibet
767–822	Life of Saichō; founding of Tendai in Japan
774–835	Life of Kūkai; founding of Shingon in Japan
792	Council of Samye (?) in Tibet
794–1185	Heian period in Japan
800–1250	Coḷa Dynasty in Tamil Nadu
838–842	Reign of Lang Darma; end of early propagation of Buddhism to Tibet
845	Persecution of Buddhism in China
960–1279	Song Dynasty in China
983	First printing of Chinese Buddhist canon
999–1026	Mahmud Ghorī attacks northern India
1009–1224	Ly Dynasty in Vietnam
1012–1097	Life of Marpa; beginnings of Kagyupa order in Tibet
1016–1100	Life of Nāropa
1040–1077	King Anawrahtā unifies Burma and makes Theravāda Buddhism state religion
1040–1123	Life of Milarepa in Tibet
1042	Atiśa arrives in Tibet
1073	Sakyapa order of Tibetan Buddhism founded by Gönchok Gyelpo
1079–1153	Life of Gampopa; establishment of a monastic order in Kagyupa order of Tibetan Buddhism

1100	Construction of Angkor Wat in Cambodia
1133–1212	Life of Hōnen; establishment of Japanese Jōdoshū school in Japan
1141–1215	Life of Eisai; Rinzai Zen brought to Japan
1158–1210	Life of Chinul; development of Sŏn in Korea
1173–1262	Life of Shinran; founding of Jōdo–shinshū in Japan
1185–1392	Kamakura Period in Japan
1200	Destruction of Nālandā Monastic University
1200	Printing of Korean Buddhist canon
1200–1253	Life of Dōgen Zenji; Sōtō Zen established in Japan
1222–1282	Life of Nichiren in Japan
1235	Tibetan pilgrim Dharmasvāmin visits north India; Buddhism dies out in India after this time
1244	Sakya Pandita travels to Mongolia; conversion of Mongols begins
1260	Theravāda Buddhism declared state religion of Sukothai
1290–1364	Life of Pudön; Tibetan canon compiled by 1334
1327	King Jayavarman Parameśvara ascends the throne and establishes Theravāda in Cambodia
1357–1419	Life of Tsongkhapa; Gelukpa order founded in Tibet
1368–1644	Ming Dynasty in China
1543–1588	Life of Sönam Gyatso, Dalai Lama III; beginning of Dalai Lama lineage
1603–1867	Buddhism becomes state religion in Japan during Tokugawa period
1617–1682	Life of 5th Dalai Lama, Ngawang Losang Gyatso; beginning of rule of Tibet by Dalai Lamas
1644–1912	Qing Dynasty in China; patronage of Tibetan Buddhism
18th century	Colonial occupation of Ceylon, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam by European powers
1749	Mongolian Buddhist canon completed
19th century	Beginning of academic study of Buddhism by Western scholars
1813–1899	Life of Jamgön Kongtrul; flourishing of Rime (Non–Sectarian) approach in Tibet
1851–1868	Reign of Rama IV in Thailand; reform of Thai Sangha
1852	First US Buddhist temple founded in San Francisco for Chinese immigrants
1853–1878	King Mindon works to revive Buddhism in Burma
1868–1912	Meiji period in Japan; Buddhism supplanted by State Shintō as national religion
1881	Pāli Text Society founded by T.R.W. Rhys Davids
1891–1956	Life of B.R. Ambedkar; mass conversion of Dalits in India
1893	World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago
1912–2004	Life of Philip Kapleau Rōshi, influential American Zen teacher
1905	Shaku Sōen begins establishment of Rinzai Zen in US

1910–1945	Japanese occupation of Korea
1924–1929	Compilation of Chinese canon (Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō) in Japan
1947	Founding of Nichiren Shōshu Sōka Gakkai
1949	Mahabodhi temple in Bodh Gaya returned to Buddhist control
1950	World Fellowship of Buddhists founded in Colombo
1950	Peoples' Liberation Army enters Tibet
1954–1956	Council of Rangoon
1959	Suzuki Rōshi arrives in San Francisco and teaches Zen
1962	San Francisco Zen Center founded
1959	14th Dalai Lama forced to flee to India; persecution of Buddhism in Tibet by Chinese
1966–1976	Cultural Revolution in China; widespread destruction of temples and monasteries; monks and nuns forced to return to lay life
1974	Chogyam Trungpa founds Naropa Institute in Colorado, USA
1975	Khmer Rouge begin "killing fields" period; Buddhism decimated in Cambodia
1970s	Beginnings of "Engaged Buddhism"
1978	Burma's military rulers persecute Buddhism; monks disrobed, monasteries closed, property seized
1996	*Bhikṣuṇī* (nuns) order revived in Sarnath, India through efforts of Sakyadhita
2000	17th Karmapa, Orgyen Tinle Dorje, escapes to India
2001	Destruction of Bamiyan Buddha statues by Taliban in Afghanistan
2006	Two Buddhists are elected for the first time in US to 10th Congress
2011	Tenzin Gyatso, 14th Dalai Lama, renounces political role

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INTRODUCTION

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John Powers

The Buddhist World joins a series of books on the world's great religions and cultures, including *The Islamic World*, edited by Andrew Rippin (2008), *The Hindu World*, edited by Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby (2007), and *The Greek World*, edited by Anton Powell (1995). Like these works, the present volume contains new research by some of the leading scholars in the field, who describe the histories, practices, and distinctive doctrines of the various regions in which Buddhism has set down roots, analyze the innovations of some of its most influential figures and why they are revered as paradigms, and discuss important topics that are intended to provide broad coverage of distinctive developments within Buddhist countries and schools, as well as issues with which adherents have wrestled during the more than 2,500 years since the time of its founder, Siddhārtha Gautama (traditionally referred to as Śākyamuni Buddha).

The notion of Buddhism as a unifying category for the essays in this book is a heuristic one, and it does not imply a deep structure or enduring essence that unifies the various manifestations of the faith from its origins to the present. Rather, it is intended as a wide-ranging and thematic entry into the field for nonspecialist readers interested in an introduction that does not pretend to be comprehensive, but rather surveys issues and figures that have influenced developments and prompted new doctrines and practices.

At the outset, a problem immediately presents itself: what exactly do we mean when we speak of a "Buddhist world"? For adherents, the whole world is governed by the truths discovered by the Buddha (and before him by other buddhas) and elaborated by the luminaries of the tradition. In an even more expansive sense, these principles apply to all worlds and all beings, both human and nonhuman. Whether or not one is aware of the operations of karma, for example, one is still bound by unalterable laws of cause and effect, and all beings inhabit a universe in which volitional actions have concordant consequences.

If we examine the history of Buddhist traditions, a number of issues arise. Buddhism originated in India around the fifth century BCE and during the next two millennia spread throughout Asia, becoming one of the most influential religious and philosophical traditions in world history. As it migrated to new regions, it adapted and developed doctrines and practices that appealed to various constituencies, while its adherents strove to retain a perceived continuity with its origins. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,

Buddhism attracted increasing numbers of converts in Europe and North America, and today it is a global faith to which hundreds of millions of people claim allegiance.

The Indian subcontinent is the historical heartland of Buddhism, but today in India it is a minority faith, whose members are vastly outnumbered by Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. Unlike Islam, which has a core sacred area to which devout believers are expected to make pilgrimages, there is no Buddhist "holy land" that is the focus of religious belonging for all believers. For centuries sites associated with the life of the Buddha were neglected, and many were only revived as pilgrimage destinations in the twentieth century. In countries where Buddhism has set down roots, local places have often become more important focal points for pilgrimage than India. Historically, for most Buddhists there has been no place or area that is uniquely sacred and that endures as a collective space for devotional activities. Even Bodh Gaya, the town where the Buddha attained awakening (*bodhi*), was largely abandoned by Buddhists for centuries before being rediscovered and reclaimed as a holy site in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

To further complicate the issues related to discussing the "Buddhist world," historically each region in which Buddhism flourished largely functioned independently of the others. Until the discovery of a world religion termed "Buddhism" by Western scholars in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most of those to whom it purportedly applied were unaware that there were people in other countries who shared a tradition they traced back to the Buddha (Allen 2002, App 2012).

Adherents of Theravāda (which predominates in Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka), for example, commonly claim that their "Buddhism" is the only authentic version of the "teachings of the Buddha" (*buddha-sāsana*) and that people in places like China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, or Mongolia follow deviant practices and doctrines derived from apocryphal scriptures. The latter, in turn, characterize Theravāda as a sect of the "Inferior Vehicle" (Hīnayāna, in contrast to their traditions, which belong to the "Greater Vehicle": Mahāyāna). Even within the "Great Vehicle," some traditions regard others as heterodox; Tibetans historically referred to themselves not as "Buddhists," but rather as "insiders" (*nang pa*), and regarded Chinese and other East Asian Buddhisms as deviations from the Buddha's true message. "Lamaism" (Lamajiao 喇嘛教), the standard Chinese term for Tibetan Buddhism, implies that it is a degenerate teaching based on idolatry of human figures.

Meetings of Buddhists from various parts of the world and representing different traditions are a recent phenomenon. For centuries, there was little contact between regions, and few had a sense of belonging to a universal faith with a shared set of doctrines and practices that linked them to others around the world. The chapters in this book reflect this diversity. Rather than trying to define exactly what "the Buddhist world" is, they describe practices of people who regard themselves as followers of the Buddha and highlight the specificity of various communities.

CONCEPTION

Like other volumes in the "Worlds" series, this book must contend with the long history of Buddhism, its vast geographical spread, and the diversity of countries in which it has had an influence. The difficulties inherent in an attempt to adequately encompass the Buddhist world in a single volume are exacerbated by the range of languages in which Buddhist canons, paracanonical works, and commentaries have been composed or translated. These include, but are not limited to: Sanskrit, Pāli, Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolian, Japanese, Thai,

Sinhala, Nepali, Korean, Vietnamese, and, in recent times, Western languages such as English, French, and German. The field of buddhology reflects this: most scholars specialize in a particular country or region, a philosophical school or thinker, or in the case of anthropologists or sociologists, sometimes a region or group. As a result, the topical essays in this volume generally reflect the expertise of the author and do not attempt to survey the entire history or various regions of the Buddhist world. This is necessary in light of the short length of the chapters and the nature of the field. It would be unreasonable, for example, to ask an author focusing on "Community" in a volume on Christianity to discuss Coptic Christians in Ethiopia, the Desert Fathers, Southern Baptists in the United States, Eastern Orthodox communities, Scottish Presbyterians, and modern movements like Opus Dei, etc. So these chapters are vignettes, most of which are concerned with a particular time, region, or group, often making references and connections to others, but mainly attempting to introduce readers to one particular aspect of the Buddhist world within defined limits of regions, languages, or historical periods.

These essays explore the complexities of Buddhism both historically and in its present manifestations. No attempt has been made to specify exactly who or what is "Buddhist"; rather, the authors accept that anyone who defines him- or herself in this way may be regarded as a follower of the Dharma (a term used by Buddhists to denote teachings and practices attributed to the Buddha). There is no standard Buddhist catechism, canon, or universally binding set of practices, and each country and region in which Buddhism has flourished has its own history and often limited contact with traditions in other areas of the world. Contemporary converts (as Charles Prebish shows in this volume) sometimes adopt an eclectic approach and borrow elements from various traditions, but Buddhists from Asian countries – even when they migrate to other places in which different forms of Buddhism are practiced or to Western countries where Buddhism is a minority religion – tend to retain the patterns of their families and clans (as Mavis Fenn and Mitra Barua demonstrate in their article).

REALIZATION

The diversity of Buddhist traditions is a defining theme of these essays, each of which yields insights into how Buddhists have conceived and practiced their faith and how it has affected the histories of countries in Asia and beyond. Individually and collectively, they indicate something of what Buddhism means to people who claim adherence to the Dharma. Each essay contributes to greater understanding of how the "Buddhist world" appears to Buddhists. Some live in countries in which Buddhism is the dominant tradition, while most share a geographical space with people belonging to other religions, or who espouse no religion at all. For most Buddhists today, their identity as followers of the Buddha is negotiated in response to the challenges of modernity and as members of multifaith societies. Few countries (e.g., Thailand) officially define Buddhism as a state religion; in most places where Buddhists live, theirs is one of many competing systems, and religious identity for them is necessarily hybrid to a greater or lesser extent. As these chapters demonstrate, this identity is also often distinctively local, reflecting the traditions of a particular ethnic group, region, country, or school, many of which have developed and passed on traditions and narratives from generation to generation. The essays highlight relations and disjunctions between the global religion identified by scholars and taught in classrooms and its manifestations at innumerable locales around the world.

The diversity of the subject matter has presented a number of difficulties to me as editor. The first of these was deciding what topics and figures needed to be covered; this was linked with decisions regarding which scholars to approach and how to brief them with regard to their tasks. Following discussions with Lesley Riddle, the series editor who initially approached me to undertake this project, this volume follows the general structures of other similar volumes in the "Worlds" series. It begins with a general introduction to Buddhism, which is intended as a broad-brush overview of the tradition from its inception to the present. It links the chapters that follow with a synthetic but necessarily sketchy structure that is intended to help readers navigate the historical and doctrinal complexities of the Buddhist world.

The next part expands on this: the seven chapters examine major areas of Buddhist influence both historically and contemporaneously. These regions are: India, Southeast Asia, East Asia, the Himalayan region, Tibet, and the United States. The borders between traditional regions are becoming increasingly blurred today, but old patterns persist, particularly in Asian Buddhist communities with longstanding histories of practice. An interesting feature of the contemporary Buddhist world is a sense of shared religious identity across former boundaries, which is manifested in various ways, including the ubiquitous presence of the "Buddhist flag" (which is commonly believed by Buddhists to be an ancient symbol of their faith, but which was designed by an American military officer, Col. Henry Steele Olcott, 1832-1907, the co-founder and first president of the Theosophical Society) and by international gatherings of Buddhists from around the world.

Part II, "The Religio-Philosophical Buddhist World," is composed of thematic chapters on topics that are particularly pertinent to understanding what Buddhists do and believe. These include discussions of canon formation and heterodoxy, ethics and moral choice, merit-making, buddhahood, soteriology, scholasticism and language, and the challenges of modernity. Most of the topics in this part were traditionally the domain of elite scholars and virtuoso practitioners, but they have nonetheless exerted wide-ranging influence, often by being incorporated into narratives or popular practices.

The next part, "The Buddhist Social World," is concerned with socio-cultural topics, including Buddhist monastic and lay communities, sectarianism, gender, the role of art in cultic practices and meditation, ideas about the body, the role of family in Buddhist societies, ritual practice, magic, contemporary communities, and environmental issues, and questions relating to war and justifications for violence. There is, of course, considerable overlap between this and the previous part, and many of the issues discussed do not fit neatly into either broad category. Choices regarding where a particular article belonged were determined by content and focus. Several of the authors of "The Buddhist Social World" pieces approach Buddhism from an ethnographic perspective, rather than a primarily textual or historical one. This part is concerned with Buddhism in the world, in its concrete manifestations, and with distinctive features of communities whose members identify as Buddhist. The articles explore a range of ways in which Buddhists adapt traditional practices in response to changing circumstances, as well as enduring patterns of merit-making. Interactions between the monastic community (*sangha*) and laity are particularly significant in this regard. Traditionally monastics are regarded as "fields of merit" (Sanskrit: *puṇya-kṣetra*; Pāli: *puñña-khetta*), meaning that gifts given to them are particularly efficacious. The *sangha* in turn provides instruction and role models of ideal practice. Regional variation in devotional activities is a central aspect of this part: each article examines a particular society or community and its distinctive ways of being "Buddhist."

The final portion of this volume, "Biographies," focuses on the lives and contributions of some of the most influential, distinctive, or representative Buddhists during the religion's long history or in the present day. The choice of which people to include was fraught with problems. During its 2,500-year history Buddhism has produced thousands of notable luminaries, and some readers will no doubt question why others were not included. Some are unproblematic: the Buddha, for example. Others were chosen for their impact on a particular region or at a particular time. All of the people featured in this part have made significant contributions to doctrine, practice, or society. All represent a particular aspect of the tradition, such as philosophy (e.g., Nāgārjuna, Wŏnhyo, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu) or practice (e.g., Nichiren and Milarepa). Others were chosen in consideration of their importance for a particular society or for contemporary global Buddhism (e.g., the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Yinshun). No set of articles of this type could hope to be comprehensive or even fully representative of Buddhism's many traditions; choices were guided by a desire to highlight some of the individuals who have significantly influenced one or more regions of the Buddhist world.

These sketches of lives, philosophies, and religious activities provide insights into how the Buddhist world is manifested in some of its most influential exemplars. They also indicate ways in which the Buddhist world has conceived itself and some of the core qualities associated with paradigmatic Dharma practitioners. These figures lived in different places and historical periods, but all regarded themselves as adhering to the Buddha's Dharma, and they are perceived as such by contemporary Buddhists who belong to communities in which they are valorized. The Buddhist world is ultimately composed of hundreds of millions of people who share a faith commitment to the Buddha's dispensation; these few illustrations of normative figures cannot be said to provide an exhaustive representation of types, ideas, or activities, but they do adumbrate the diversity of the historical and contemporary Buddhist world in its various manifestations.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The linguistic variety of Buddhist literature has presented me with a number of choices. Some introductory works on Buddhism dispense with diacritical marks, which some nonspecialist readers find offputting. In this volume, however, technical terms from Sanskrit and Pāli are rendered with standard diacritics. This choice was made in order to facilitate further engagement with Buddhism. Any work beyond the most basic introductions employs the standard conventions of the field (which also include in-line Chinese characters, a system of diacritics for Vietnamese, and the use of a Tibetan transcription system developed by Turrell Wylie). Readers who wish to further explore the richness and diversity of the Buddhist world will need to become at least minimally familiar with these conventions in order to access the growing corpus of works on Buddhism by academics.

The very diversity of the Buddhist world made it difficult to achieve uniformity across the volume, but all contributors accepted a number of standardizations. These included the use of common equivalents for key vocabulary (for instance, the Sanskrit term *bodhi*, which is often translated as "enlightenment," has been rendered as "awakening" because the Sanskrit root *budh*, from which it is derived, literally means "to wake up"). Chinese names and terms are followed by characters and use Pinyin spellings, and Japanese terms are followed by *kanji* and/or *hiragana* spellings. Tibetan names are rendered phonetically, generally followed by Wylie equivalents.

The complex linguistic and doctrinal history of various Buddhisms is reflected in the range of languages and canons discussed in this volume. In each case, I have opted to follow the most widely accepted academic conventions. Because of my own limitations and differences in expertise among the contributors, there have been some spirited discussions over terminology, formatting, style, and other matters, but all have been resolved amicably. In a number of cases, authors pointed out issues that were not initially apparent to me, and this project has been a learning experience in many ways. A number of compromises proved to be necessary, and it is hoped that readers will recognize the ultimate value of standardization in a work of this scope. Place names that are widely attested in contemporary sources are generally given without diacritical marks. Technical terms that have Indic origins are commonly first mentioned in their original language, which might suggest an Indo-centric bias to some readers, but this convention was adopted in order to facilitate comprehension and recognition for nonspecialists. No notion of cultural priority is implied.

The contributors to this volume have done a commendable job of making their insights accessible to a nonspecialist audience. Without sacrificing scholarly integrity, they have – often through a process of multiple revisions – outlined the major events and personalities of this ancient global religion and highlighted traditional debates and conundrums that have arisen as it confronts the challenges of modernity. The result is a rich and diverse collection of essays that are issue-oriented, written both as introductions to Buddhist traditions and as invitations for further exploration.

The cumulative result of these essays is an impression of hybrid diversity and continuity, in terms of both histories and philosophies. There is no single characteristic that emerges as a defining feature of all Buddhists at all times (except, perhaps, for a shared belief that their respective faiths all originate with the Buddha). The Buddhist world is a multifaceted and dynamic concept, which changes in response to historical circumstances and new ideas. The Buddha reportedly advised his disciples to adapt his teachings to different audiences and individual proclivities, and this imperative toward skillful novel iterations of the Dharma has been a pervasive feature of the Buddhist world from the beginning. This process continues today, and each chapter of this volume illustrates one aspect of this reality.

SELECTED REFERENCE WORKS

Each chapter in this volume contains a concise selection of references relevant to its main topic. These represent the state of the field today and are intended to provide readers with additional sources to further explore the Buddhist world in all its richness and diversity. In addition to these, there is a growing corpus of well-written and well-researched works that are worth recommending. There are several accessible and authoritative introductions to Buddhism, including Charles Prebish and Damien Keown's *Introducing Buddhism* (London: Routledge, 2006); Rupert Gethin's *The Foundations of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); John Strong's *Experience of Buddhism: Sources and Interpretations* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 2007); and Peter Harvey's *An Introduction to Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; 2nd edition). Jay L. Garfield's *Engaging Buddhism: Why It Matters to Philosophy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) is an exploration of Buddhist thought in a global context and the relevance of some of its greatest thinkers to contemporary philosophical issues. Paul Williams' *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (London: Routledge, 1989) remains the definitive introduction to the Great Vehicle and its philosophies.

Damien Keown's *Dictionary of Buddhism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) contains concise and authoritative definitions of key terms. Robert Buswell and Donald Lopez' *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013) is another useful reference work with more than 5,000 entries by leading scholars. Damien Keown and Charles Prebish's *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (London: Routledge, 2004) and Robert Buswell's *Encyclopedia of Buddhism* (New York: Macmillan Reference, 2004) are authoritative volumes that provide more expansive discussion and information on a wide range of topics and major figures.

There are also a number of works that focus on a particular region in which Buddhism has exerted significant influence, either historically or in the present. Étienne Lamotte's monumental *History of Indian Buddhism* (Louvain: Université de Louvain, 1988), although somewhat dated, remains a good source for authoritative information on the cultural and historical background of early Buddhism in the Indian subcontinent. Richard Gombrich's *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (London: Routledge, 2006; 2nd edition) is a concise introduction to the dominant Buddhist traditions of Southeast Asia. Ian Reader's *Religion in Contemporary Japan* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1991) examines the distinctive doctrines of Japanese Buddhism and its connections with other religions, including Shintō, Daoism, and Confucianism. Kenneth Ch'en's venerable but dated *Buddhism in China: A Historical Survey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964) remains the best overall introduction to Chinese Buddhist history, doctrines, and practices. John Powers' *Introduction to Tibetan Buddhism* (Ithaca: Snow Lion, 2007; 2nd edition) provides information on the history, major figures, and practices of Buddhism in Tibet and surrounding areas.

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PART I

THE HISTORICAL AND GEO-POLITICAL BUDDHIST WORLD

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CHAPTER ONE

BUDDHAS AND BUDDHISMS

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John Powers

ORIGINS

In the middle of the first millennium BCE in India, there were a number of movements of ascetics (*śramaṇa*) who sought to liberate the self or soul (*ātman*) from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth (*saṃsāra*) through various combinations of meditation and physical regimens designed to eliminate attachment to the world. The end goal was variously conceived as rebirth in heaven or a transcendent state in which the soul, completely separated from matter, remained forever in bliss.

The movement that would become known as Buddhism, however, rejected several key elements of its rivals' systems. Siddhārtha Gautama – referred to by Buddhists as "*Buddha*," meaning "Awakened One" – declared that there is no permanent, enduring self or essence, either in persons or in phenomena, and that the things of the universe come into being as a result of causes and conditions, undergo constant change, and eventually pass away. Thus they have no self (*anātman*; Pāli: *anattā*)[1] and are impermanent (*anitya*; Pāli: *anicca*). As a result of the transient nature of phenomena and conditions in the world, we are unable to hold onto things we find desirable and have to endure unpleasant situations. Because this is the case, the Buddha further stated that the phenomena of cyclic existence are profoundly unsatisfactory and prone to lead to suffering (*duḥkha*; Pāli: *dukkha*). Beings transmigrate from life to life because of their actions (*karma*; Pāli: *kamma*). Ordinary beings make decisions based on a misperception of the true nature of reality, and their ignorance (*avidyā*; Pāli: *avijjā*) leads them to do things that are counterproductive and that result in future unhappiness.

After "awakening" to the true nature of reality, the Buddha began to teach others and created an order of monks (*bhikṣu*; Pāli: *bhikkhu*) dedicated to moral behavior and introspective meditation who sought to overcome false beliefs and negative actions that result in continued rebirth. The Buddha referred to the final state of liberation as "nirvana," and declared that it is the supreme religious goal, a state of perfect peace beyond the changes and disappointments of ordinary existence. During his lifetime, the monastic order spread, and he also began to attract a number of lay followers. He later instituted an ordination for nuns, and following his death his monastic and lay followers spread his message beyond India to surrounding countries. At some point in the past 2,500 years,

Buddhism has been a major religion in most areas of Asia, and today millions of people in North and South America, Europe, Australia, and Africa identify themselves as Buddhists.

Typically one becomes a Buddhist by "taking refuge" in the "three refuges" (or "three jewels"): (1) Buddha; (2) Dharma (Pāli: Dhamma: Buddhist doctrine and practice); and (3) Saṃgha (Pāli Saṅgha: the monastic community). Taking refuge is a formal commitment to engage in Buddhist practice and an acknowledgement that one needs help to attain salvation. The Buddha is a person who found the path to final liberation, the Dharma encompasses his teachings and techniques designed to help others to attain it for themselves, and the Saṅgha is a community of religious practitioners who have devoted their lives to studying and teaching the Dharma and putting it into practice in their daily lives.

THE BUDDHA

Traditional Biographies of the Buddha

Despite his importance for Buddhism and his status as the founder of a major religion, nothing is known with certainty about the Buddha's life. There are several popular biographies, but the earliest was written hundreds of years after his death, and extant accounts contain conflicting details, legends, and mythological material. While these texts may be unreliable as historical sources, they reveal a great deal about how the figure of the Buddha is conceived by Buddhists and how his life has become an exemplary tale of the path to liberation that integrates the ideals, beliefs, and practices of various traditions. The account that follows will present the main features of the Buddha's life that are found in the most popular biographical sources (the chapter by Richard Hayes in this volume expands on this brief account). These include statements in a number of sermons (*sūtra*; Pāli: *sutta*) attributed to the Buddha and contained in the canon of the Theravāda school; the *Great Story* (*Mahāvastu*), composed in the first century CE; the *Extensive Sport* (*Lalitavistara*), and the *Deeds of the Buddha* (*Buddhacarita*), composed by Aśvaghoṣa in the second century CE.

According to Buddhist tradition, there have been buddhas in the past, and there will be more in the future. Each future buddha begins the path to awakening (*bodhi*) by making a vow to a buddha to pursue buddhahood in order to benefit countless living beings. Stories of his past lives report that the man who founded the tradition known as Buddhism (referred to as Śākyamuni – "Sage of the Śākyas" – because he was born into the Śākya clan) first resolved to follow the path to awakening when he met the buddha Dīpaṃkara countless eons ago. He made a vow before Dīpaṃkara that he too would one day become a buddha and that he would dedicate countless lives to the pursuit of such qualities as compassion, generosity, patience, and wisdom in order to help the innumerable beings in the universe who are suffering. From that point onward, he gradually cultivated the exalted qualities of a buddha.

The Buddha's Past Lives

The *Birth Stories* (*Jātaka*), a collection of narratives of the Buddha's previous lives that describe how he cultivated and displayed exemplary qualities, is widely popular throughout the Buddhist world. They describe his progress in perfecting the matrix of attitudes and practices that lead to buddhahood. In one of these stories, he was an ascetic named Kṣāntivādin (He Who Professes Patience), who strove to perfect the virtue of patience. One day he was meditating at the fringes of a king's pleasure grove. When the king fell into a

drunken sleep, his courtesans wandered off. Upon seeing Kṣāntivādin, they asked him to describe his religious practices.

Meanwhile, the king woke up and became enraged because his retinue had left him, and when he found them seated around Kṣāntivādin, the king angrily strode up to him and demanded to know what he was teaching his courtesans. Kṣāntivādin responded that he proclaimed the "doctrine of patience." He explained that patience requires that one not become angry "even when people abuse you or strike and revile you." The king decided to expose him as a fraud and ordered his executioner to whip him with a branch of thorns one thousand times. Even though his flesh was torn open and blood flowed, he told the king that his patience was more than skin deep, that it permeated his entire body. The king commanded the executioner to cut off both of Kṣāntivādin's hands, but the ascetic remained unperturbed. He then ordered that Kṣāntivādin's feet be severed, followed by his nose and ears, but at no time did he become angry or protest. Before he died, he forgave the king for his evil deeds, with the result that this extraordinary display of patience helped him to perfect equanimity. When one cultivates a spiritual quality like patience or generosity – particularly when one is tested to the extreme like Kṣāntivādin – this practice has a profound effect on one's mental continuum, and it influences not only subsequent moments of one's present existence but future lives as well.

In his penultimate birth, he was a prince named Vessantara (Ideal Action), who excelled in the practice of generosity. Upon learning that a neighboring kingdom was beset by drought, he gave it a magical elephant that brought rain wherever it went. When the people of his kingdom heard that he had given away this symbol of their prosperity, they protested to Vessantara's father the king, who reluctantly ordered him exiled. But even after losing his royal birthright, Vessantara continued to give away his possessions. Accompanied by his wife and two children, he set off into exile, and when an evil brahman asked Vessantara for his children, he immediately agreed, even though they clung to his legs and begged him to change his mind. He later gave away his wife to an ascetic (the god Brahmā in disguise), following which he was restored to his kingdom, but he continued to practice generosity until the end of his life. Because of his magnanimity and the good karma he generated through his actions, he was reborn in Tuṣita heaven, the final destination for those who are about to become buddhas.

The *Jātaka* stories function as benchmarks for Buddhists, presenting extraordinary examples of the cultivation of a particular quality, such as patience, morality, or generosity, and are examples of total commitment to the religious path and to the betterment of others. Most Buddhists fall short of these ideals, and few people who hear them are motivated to give away their lives, their bodies, or all their possessions to help others, but the enduring popularity of these tales indicates that they serve to motivate sincere Buddhists to greater efforts in cultivating positive attitudes and actions.

The Buddha's Birth and Early Years

Siddhārtha Gautama was born in the Terai Lowlands near the foothills of the Himalayas in modern-day Nepal. He probably lived during the fifth century BCE (around 490–410 BCE), though there is considerable debate among Buddhist traditions and contemporary scholars regarding the time of his birth and death.

According to traditional accounts, Siddhārtha (He Whose Aims Are Accomplished) was born in the town of Kapilavastu, the capital city of a small kingdom ruled by his father Śuddhodana. Near the end of her pregnancy, his mother Māyā traveled to her parents' home

to give birth, but went into labor along the way in a grove named Lumbinī. She stood with her hand on a tree, and the future buddha emerged from her side and floated to the ground. He took seven steps in each of the four cardinal directions, and lotuses bloomed where his feet touched the earth. He then declared that this would be his final birth.

As was customary, his father commanded astrologers to predict his son's future, and all but one agreed that he would become a great king (*cakravartin*). One astrologer, however, stated that he would pursue this path only if he were shielded from the harsh realities of the world and prevented from seeing old age, sickness, and death prior to his ascension to the throne. He should also be prevented from encountering world-renouncing ascetics, because they would present him with an alternative way of life.

Determined that his son would follow in his footsteps and inherit the kingdom, Śuddhodana ordered that no sick or old people be allowed in the palace and that if anyone died the corpse should be removed quickly. Siddhārtha was surrounded by beautiful courtesans, whose duty was to keep him entertained and engaged in worldly pleasures. He excelled at sports and martial arts, and he won every contest of skill and strength. He was also highly intelligent and quickly mastered all aspects of learning, including sciences and arts. At the age of sixteen, he married a beautiful princess named Yaśodharā, and soon afterward she gave birth to a son. By this time, however, Siddhārtha had become dissatisfied with his life of luxury and conceived an interest in renouncing the world and pursuing liberation, and so he named his son Rāhula (Fetter), indicating that he was one of the many factors preventing him from entering the religious life.

> I was comfortable, extremely comfortable, incomparably comfortable. My father's mansion had lotus pools of blue, red, and white all for my benefit … Day and night a white canopy was held over me to protect me from the cold, heat, dust, chaff, or dew. I had three palaces, one for winter, one for summer, and one for the rainy season. During the rainy season, I was in the palace suited for the rains surrounded by female entertainers and was never left alone.
>
> *Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.145ff

According to one account, at the age of twenty-nine Siddhārtha requested that he be allowed to go out into the city, but his father was hesitant because of the possibility that he might be confronted by the old, the sick, by world renouncers, or by signs of death (collectively referred to as the "four sights"). Śuddhodana finally acceded to the request but ordered his soldiers to clear the streets of all evidence of suffering. Despite his efforts, as the royal chariot swept through the streets, accompanied by the cheers of the townsfolk, an old and decrepit man wandered in front of it, and the charioteer was forced to stop as he hobbled painfully across the street. Never having seen an old person before, Siddhārtha asked how the man came to be so afflicted, his frame bent, his gait slow and painful, his body shaking and frail. Channa the charioteer told the prince that old age is the fate of all beings, and when Siddhārtha was further informed that he too would eventually lose his youthful vigor and become like the old man, he was profoundly distressed and asked to be returned to the palace.

Renouncing the World

No longer satisfied with the fleeting enjoyments provided for him, Siddhārtha contemplated the uncomfortable fact of his own mortality. In subsequent trips into the city, he encountered

a sick man and a corpse, and he was informed that all beings – including pampered princes – become sick and old, and eventually die. On a fourth trip, he observed a world renouncer, standing above the crowd in perfect equanimity, and he saw a way out of his dilemma. Upon his return to the palace, he announced that he intended to leave his home and become a wandering ascetic, dedicated to the pursuit of final liberation from cyclic existence. His father refused to allow this and promised to provide Siddhārtha whatever he desired if he would stay. The prince asked if his father could guarantee that he would never become ill, never grow old, and never die, to which Śuddhodana remained silent.

> In the spring of my life, despite the tears shed by my parents, I shaved my head, put on robes, renounced my home, and became a homeless monk.
>
> *Majjhima-nikāya* I.163

One night after a celebration Siddhārtha observed the palace courtesans slumped in various unflattering positions, their clothes disheveled, drool coming from their mouths, and he decided that their beautiful appearance during the party was merely superficial. Disgusted by the sight of the revelers passed out on the floor, he decided to leave the palace that very night and ordered Channa to prepare the royal chariot.

Siddhārtha rode through the palace gates, determined to begin a new life as a world renouncer. When he reached the edge of the forest, he said his goodbyes to Channa, and with no regrets walked into the wilderness. He encountered a woodsman, who asked him why a prince was wandering in the woods wearing royal robes, and Siddhārtha informed him that he intended to pursue the path of an ascetic. The woodsman noted that he was over-dressed for such a lifestyle change and offered to exchange his coarse garments, more appropriate to life in the wilderness, and Siddhārtha agreed.

For the next few years, Siddhārtha wandered in pursuit of a way to overcome the problem of suffering. He studied with two teachers who had mastered techniques leading to blissful trance states, but after attaining them he realized that they were merely temporary respites that could not provide a final escape from suffering. He later joined a group of five ascetics who pursued a path of extreme self-abnegation. They believed that long periods of fasting and painful austerities are the best way to overcome attachment to the world and attain liberation. Siddhārtha threw himself into these practices with great vigor and eventually was able to subsist on a single grain of rice per day. Images of the "Fasting Buddha" depicting this period of his life are widely popular throughout the Buddhist world. They show an emaciated body, each rib standing out with skin thinly stretched over it, the sinews of the neck clearly visible, with emaciated arms and legs.

One day Siddhārtha was engaged in ascetic practices, but owing to physical weakness he fell unconscious. When he awoke, he realized that self-mortification is as misguided as the luxury and indulgence of his earlier life, and he decided that a "middle way" (*madhyama-pratipad*; Pāli: *majjhima-paṭipadā*) that avoids either extreme is the best way to pursue liberation. This notion became one of the most influential doctrines of Buddhism, and was later extended to a principle of rejecting not only extreme ways of life but also extreme philosophical views.

> These two extremes, O monks, should not be practiced by one who has gone forth [from the household life]. What are the two? That which is linked with sensual desires – which is low, vulgar, common, unworthy, and useless – and that which is linked with

self-torture – which is painful, unworthy, and useless. By avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata [Buddha] has gained the knowledge of the middle path that gives vision and knowledge, and leads to calm, to clairvoyances, to awakening, to nirvana.

Saṃyutta-nikāya V.420–423

Awakening (Bodhi)

As Siddhārtha contemplated his new perspective on religious practice, a young woman who was passing by offered him a sweet rice dish she had prepared. He ate enough to revive his strength, but his fellow ascetics viewed this as an indulgence and decided that he had lost his way. Siddhārtha, however, realized that their path leads only to hunger and physical pain, and so he resolved to leave them and find the way to liberation by himself. Later, he stood by the banks of a river and vowed to attain final awakening or perish in the attempt.

He then sat under a tree referred to in Buddhist tradition as the "Tree of Awakening" (Bodhi-vṛkṣa) at Bodh Gayā (Place of Awakening) in modern-day Bihār. After assuming a meditative posture, he entered into a series of blissful meditative absorptions (*dhyāna*; Pāli *jhāna*). During the first watch of the night, he was able to see all of his past lives, and he recalled where he had been, what he had done, and the results of his actions.

In the next watch, he understood the workings of karma, how actions lead to concordant results and how intentions influence both thoughts and deeds. He understood how beings are driven to perform certain actions because of their past karma and how this process results in effects in the present life and in the future.

During the third watch, he fully comprehended the operations of cause and effect and how things arise, change, and pass away in dependence upon causes and conditions (*pratītya-samutpāda*; Pāli: *paṭicca-samuppāda*). He destroyed all of his mental afflictions, false views, and ignorance. He understood the unsatisfactory nature of cyclic existence and how suffering can be overcome. Moreover, he knew with certainty that all his mental afflictions and desire for worldly enjoyments had been eliminated, that he had no more craving or delusions. He had "done what needed to be done."

> I truly made effort and endeavor, my thought was firm and undistracted, my body was tranquil and passive, and my mind was concentrated. I was free of desires and unwholesome thoughts, and though I still had initial thought and discursive thought, I had arrived at the first meditation with the joy created by such a separation. … My mind became concentrated, purified, cleansed, without defilement, pliable, flexible, established and immovable. I then directed my mind to wisdom raising the recollections of my past lives … recalling numerous lives along with each individual appearance and detailed conditions. … This was the first light of wisdom attained during the early part of the night. … I then directed my mind toward the knowledge of the birth and death of all living beings. … I observed living beings die and be born … following the results of their karma. … This was the second light of wisdom attained during the middle of the night. … Then I directed my mind toward the knowledge of the wisdom that eliminates ignorance. At that time, I realized [the truth about] the unsatisfactory condition of life. … When I realized this, my mind was freed from the defilement of desire, my mind was freed from the defilement of ignorance, and as I became free, I realized that I was free… . This was the third wisdom attained at the end of the night.

Majjhima-nikāya I.21ff

The Buddha's Teaching Career

After attaining buddhahood, Siddhārtha decided to share his new insights with others. The first recipients of his message were his five former ascetic companions, who were living at Sārnāth, a town near Banaras. He walked from Bodh Gayā to Sārnāth to teach them what he had learned, but when they saw him approaching they decided to ignore him. As he drew nearer, however, they recognized a change in his demeanor: he radiated calm and wisdom, and despite themselves they asked what had happened to him. Siddhārtha informed them that he had become a buddha, and when he offered to teach them the path he had found, they agreed to listen. The sermon he preached to the five ascetics is referred to as the "Discourse Turning the Wheel of Doctrine" (*Dharma-cakra-pravartana-sūtra*) because it initiated the Buddha's teaching career, which would last for forty years. For the rest of his life, he traveled widely in northern India and taught all who wished to listen to his message.

Upon hearing the Buddha's teaching, one of the ascetics immediately became a "stream-enterer," meaning that he had grasped the essence and that he would attain nirvana within a few lifetimes. As the Buddha continued to expand on his earlier teachings during the next week, the other four also became stream-enterers, and he then ordained them as monks. After they heard his second sermon, all became *arhat*s (Pāli: *arahant*), meaning that they had eliminated all mental afflictions and grasping for worldly things and would attain nirvana when they died. They had brought an end to suffering and had realized the culmination of the religious path, but they were not buddhas; only those who find the path for themselves and then teach it to others are buddhas. But arhats also attain awakening and thus transcend suffering.

Awakening may come suddenly, elicited by a sound or an event, or it may be the result of a gradual process of altering one's perceptions, cultivating moral attitudes and behaviors, practicing introspective meditation, and developing good qualities. It may require millions of lives, or it may be prompted by hearing the words of a buddha and spontaneously comprehending their meaning.

The Monastic Order

After initiating an order of monks by ordaining the five ascetics, the Buddha began to travel and to attract more followers. One of the most important was Ānanda, his cousin, who was converted during a visit to Kapilavastu during the twentieth year of his ministry. Ānanda became the Buddha's personal attendant for the rest of his life and played a crucial role in the history of the tradition by reciting the Buddha's discourses during the "first council," which was convened to settle questions regarding exactly what the master had taught (see the chapter by Hubbard in this volume).

Another important disciple was Upāli, who also became a follower of the Buddha during his visit to Kapilavastu. Upāli was recognized as the master of teachings regarding monastic discipline (*vinaya*) and recited the Buddha's instructions on this subject during the first council.

Five years after his awakening, his stepmother Prajāpatī (who had raised him following his mother's death shortly after she gave birth), together with a number of other women, approached the Buddha to request that he institute an order of nuns. Although he was initially reluctant, he eventually agreed, and a significant number of women opted to receive ordination. He also attracted lay followers, some of whom became patrons of the monastics.

Because travel is difficult in India during the monsoon season, the Buddha declared that monks and nuns should remain in retreat huts during that time. As the order expanded, these grew into large centers with permanent custodians, and increasing numbers of monastics resided in them year round. Within a short time after the Buddha's death, the wandering lifestyle of the early community became increasingly rare, and eventually most monks and nuns ceased to wander at all, preferring to remain in the monasteries. This proved to be important in the later development of Buddhism, as monasteries became centers of learning and meditation training, providing educational resources and skilled teachers for novices and advanced students.

The Buddha's Final Days

After wandering and teaching for forty years, the Buddha was beset by a number of infirmities, including a chronically painful back. During periods of meditative trance, he was able to suspend the pain, but at one point he told Ānanda that he had decided to pass into nirvana soon: "I have grown old … and have traveled down the road of life to my eightieth year. [I am like] an old cart that can barely manage to hold itself together without the help of leather straps" (*Dīgha-nikāya* II.100).

An account of his last days reports that at one point he was residing in the city of Vaiśālī, where he made a final rainy season retreat with some disciples. During this time he suffered a painful illness, and he subsequently decided that he would renounce his "life principle" in three months. When he made this declaration, the earth shook in recognition of the significance of the immanent passing of the Buddha.

He then left Vaiśālī for the final time and walked to a grove of trees near the village of Kuśinagara, where he lay down between two trees on his right side, his head facing north. The trees came into bloom out of season, and the blossoms rained down on the reclining Buddha. Celestial music was heard in the sky. He told Ānanda that he was about to die and that henceforth the Dharma and Vinaya should guide the monastic community. The Buddha did not appoint a successor; matters concerning the Saṅgha and its members were to be settled by meeting as a group and reaching consensus.

The Buddha then addressed the monks who were gathered around him, asking if any had lingering doubts regarding his doctrine or monastic discipline. All remained silent, indicating that they had no qualms or reservations. He then spoke his final words: "All conditioned things are subject to decay and disintegration. Seek your own salvation with diligence!" (*Dīgha-nikāya* II.156). The Buddha then entered into a profound and peaceful meditative state and passed into final nirvana (*parinirvāṇa*).

Shortly before his death, the Buddha was asked what should be done with his body after his passing. He instructed his followers to cremate the corpse and to store the bits of bone and other relics that remained in reliquary monuments called *stūpa*s, which should be constructed at the crossroads of major routes so that many people might worship and remember the teachings of the Buddha. As he ordered, his body was cremated, and the ashes and relics were divided and placed in eight *stūpa*s. The community he had founded continued to grow and in the following centuries left the land of its origin and became established throughout Asia; it later traveled into other areas of the world.

Creation of a Buddhist Canon

The Buddha is often compared by his followers to a skillful doctor, who assigns the proper medicine to each of his patients. What is appropriate for one ailment will not work for all afflictions, and the task of a physician is to determine which is most effective in a given situation. Similarly, as the Buddha traveled and met with various people, he encountered a range of spiritual maladies, and his teachings and practices were specific to each individual's needs. After his death, his followers were faced with an often conflicting collection of statements made at various times during his forty-year ministry that suited the proclivities of his immediate audiences, but no attempt was made to develop them into a coherent system until after his passing.

Shortly after the Buddha's death, some of his followers became concerned that the disciples who had been present at his teachings were decreasing in numbers as age took its toll, and many arhats had decided to enter nirvana now that the Buddha was no longer present. A senior monk named Kāśyapa was shocked to learn that a young monk rejoiced at the Buddha's death, thinking that now he would no longer be bound by Vinaya rules and could do whatever he wanted. Kāśyapa decided to convene a council at Rājagṛha, the site of many public teachings, to record the Buddha's words (*buddha-vacana*) and clarify the details of monastic discipline. It was attended by 500 arhats. Only arhats were invited, because it was assumed that their memories would be clear and unclouded by animosities, obscuration, sectarianism, or bias.

At the last moment, Ānanda became an arhat, which was crucial because as the Buddha's personal assistant he had been present for most of the Buddha's public and private discourses. He was able to recite 60,000 words of the master's teachings without omitting a single syllable and could recite 15,000 stanzas of his discourses. Ānanda recounted each of these from memory, beginning with the formula: "Thus have I heard at one time… ." This certified that he had first-hand knowledge of what had been said. The rules of monastic discipline were recited by Upāli, and following the recitations the other arhats agreed with what had been said or made minor adjustments, after which the assembly agreed that the "word of the Buddha" had been definitively decided and that no new discourses would be admitted to the canon.

Despite these sentiments, new oral texts continued to appear and circulate, and in later centuries vast numbers of new sūtras were composed in India and attributed to the Buddha. Faced with the daunting task of sorting through the large canon they had inherited, various schools arose with competing interpretations of what the Buddha had said and varying collections of texts. In the first century after the Buddha's death most of the major differences of opinion appear to have focused on matters of monastic discipline, but over time distinct philosophical schools developed, with divergent doctrines and practices.

THE DHARMA

Suffering and happiness

Buddhists refer to the doctrines and practices taught by the Buddha (or that they attribute to him) as "dharma," a term that encompasses a range of meanings, including "truth," "doctrine," and "law." Each tradition and school of Buddhism has its own version of what should be considered to be the true Dharma, and Buddhists commonly make a distinction between the Buddha's final and definitive intention (*nītārtha*) and other teachings that were

only delivered on a provisional basis (*neyārtha*), for the benefit of trainees who would profit from them but were unable to grasp his final thought.

Some aspects of Buddhist doctrine are counterintuitive and claim that the way in which things appear to the senses is not an accurate vision of reality. Moreover, conventional attitudes and orientations – such as pursuit of one's own pleasures, wealth, sex, power, fame, etc. – while widely viewed as productive of happiness, in fact lead to suffering and frustration. Acceptance of ordinary perceptions and attitudes results in pain, loss, and an unfulfilled life, but if one examines the world to discern how things really exist one can find lasting peace and happiness. The Buddha claimed that his doctrine was not an innovation: previous buddhas had discovered it, and any wise person is also capable of grasping the truth of his teachings. Whether or not buddhas appear in the world, things are as they are, and buddhas merely discover and teach the truth but do not alter reality.

A number of core teachings are widely accepted by various Buddhist traditions as having originated with the Buddha, though there is considerable debate whether they are definitive or provisional. It is generally accepted, for example, that the Buddha declared that all phenomena are characterized by "three marks" (*trilakṣaṇa*; Pāli: *tilakkhaṇa*): they lack a substantial or enduring self; they are impermanent; and they are prone to suffering.

> Whether buddhas arise, O monks, or whether buddhas do not arise, it remains a fact that…all constituents are transitory…that all constituents are unsatisfactory…that all constituents lack a permanent self.
>
> *Aṅguttara-nikāya* III.134

The Four Noble Truths

> Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, old age is suffering, death is suffering, grieving, dejection, and despair are suffering. Contact with unpleasant things is suffering, not getting what you want is also suffering. In short, the five aggregates of grasping are suffering.
>
> *Saṃyutta-nikāya* V.421–422

One of the most influential teachings attributed to the Buddha is the four "noble truths" (*ārya-satya*; Pāli: *ariya-sacca*), which are outlined in the first sermon. These are: (1) suffering (*duḥkha*); (2) the cause of suffering (*samudaya*); (3) the cessation of suffering (*nirodha*); and (4) the path (*mārga*; Pāli: *magga*) that leads to the eradication of suffering. The first describes the condition of ordinary beings caught up in cyclic existence, who are subject to loss and pain, who become sick, grow old, and die, and then are reborn and endure the same conditions again and again.

Buddhists do not deny the presence of happiness and joy in the world; many people who have only studied Buddhism through texts are surprised when they encounter advanced Buddhist meditators because they generally radiate contentment, happiness, and spontaneous joy. They are able to do this because they recognize that situations in the world are prone to change without warning and that present happiness will undoubtedly end, and so they do not expect it to last, nor are they overly disappointed when it does. This is not a pessimistic attitude: rather, Buddhists claim that it is simply the way things are, and it takes reality as it is without projecting unfulfillable expectations onto it. If a sick person stubbornly refuses to

acknowledge the existence of an ailment or to take the medicine prescribed to cure it, he or she is unlikely to get better, and Buddhists assert that the truth of suffering is a dispassionate analysis of the true nature of reality and its underlying causes. Moreover, as one progresses on the path, one experiences progressively greater joy and peace, and one's understanding increases, bringing with it an expansive vision of the world.

Suffering is divided into three types: (1) suffering of change, which occurs when one is separated from things that one desires or is forced to endure things that are unpleasant; (2) suffering of pain, as when one is afflicted with disease, when one is hurt by being beaten, or when one suffers emotional distress; and (3) pervasive suffering, the fact that situations are uncertain: one might be hit by a car or become seriously ill at any time, and there is no way to know in advance when this might happen. The Buddha declared that this situation is unsatisfactory, and the term *duḥkha* (which is generally translated as "suffering") actually encompasses a wide variety of unpleasant things, ranging from mild annoyances up to violent and painful death. All of the experiences in this continuum are unwelcome, and beings would rather not encounter them, but because the world is as it is, at some point we all do.

> Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the arising of suffering: that craving which leads to rebirth, combined with longing and lust for this and that – craving for sensual pleasure, craving for rebirth, craving for cessation of birth.

The second truth analyzes how suffering arises. The Buddha declared that the root of suffering is desire, and that beings suffer because they unrealistically wish to have what they want and to avoid what they find unpleasant, but because they engage in actions that lead to negative results suffering is inevitable.

> Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the path that leads to the cessation of suffering: This is the noble eightfold path, namely: correct views, correct intentions, correct speech, correct actions, correct livelihood, correct effort, correct mindfulness, and correct concentration.
>
> Now monks, as long as my threefold knowledge and insight regarding these noble truths…were not well purified, so long, O monks, I was not sure that…I had attained the highest and complete awakening. But when my threefold knowledge and insight into these noble truths…was well purified, then, O monks, I was sure that…I had attained the highest and complete awakening. Now knowledge and insight have arisen in me, so that I know: My mind's liberation is assured; this is my last existence; for me there is no rebirth.

Beings desire many things, including sensual pleasures and material goods, continued existence, or nonexistence. Desire for continued existence is the wish that one will live forever, and desire for nonexistence refers to the desire to eliminate unpleasant situations or people. In extreme versions, it can even lead to suicide, which is a rejection of one's present life and suffering that one finds unbearable. From a Buddhist perspective, however, suicide is not a solution, because it is motivated by strongly negative emotions and will result in an even more unpleasant rebirth.

The third truth declares that while dissatisfaction is the lot of all ordinary beings and that they have encountered every imaginable suffering in past lives, it is not necessarily a

permanent state of affairs. There is a way to eliminate suffering, and this involves changing attitudes, views, and actions, as well as cultivating mental states that are characterized by calm, compassion, and morality.

> Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the complete cessation without remainder of that craving, the abandonment, release from, and non-attachment to it.

The eightfold noble path is the way prescribed by the Buddha for those who wish to overcome suffering and experience true and lasting happiness. It consists of: (1) correct views; (2) correct intentions; (3) correct speech; (4) correct actions; (5) correct livelihood; (6) correct effort; (7) correct mindfulness; and (8) correct concentration. The first involves examining one's beliefs to determine which are correct and which are not. The most pernicious wrong view is the belief in a permanent self, which can be counteracted through empirical observation and analysis. Correct view also involves determining the accuracy of Buddhist doctrines like impermanence, dependent arising, and karma.

Correct intention requires that one focus one's energies and efforts on things that will lead to positive results – particularly religious practice and cultivation of moral attitudes – and place less emphasis on things that do not lead to progress on the Buddhist path.

Correct speech, correct actions, and correct livelihood are all classified under the heading of "morality" (*śīla*; Pāli: *sīla*) because they involve restraining oneself from performing actions that are motivated by afflicted states of mind and cultivating moral attitudes. Correct actions are those that lead to positive karma, that are beneficial to oneself and others, and that are motivated by compassion and love. One's speech is a reflection of one's state of mind, and rough, coarse, abusive, or lying speech is driven by corresponding mental afflictions. Thus it is important to speak in a way that is pleasing to others, to tell the truth, and to eschew gossip and other forms of speech that are hurtful. Correct livelihood requires that one avoid professions that necessitate performance of actions that harm others, like butchery, fishing or hunting, or dealing in arms or drugs.

Correct effort refers to sustained application to the Buddhist path, to cultivation of morality, to the development of positive mental states, and to doing this all the time, and not just for short intervals. Buddhist practice is designed to reorient one's mind and change one's life, and so it must be integrated into all aspects of it.

Most of the time, most beings engage in actions with little thought to why they do them or their consequences. Correct mindfulness is a process whereby one cultivates a state of keen awareness of one's body, sensations, feelings, thoughts, impulses, and the phenomena of the surrounding environment. It also involves examining one's views and motivations and considering how they influence behavior. Through this process, one becomes aware of the transitory and fleeting nature of phenomena and of one's mental states and the consequences of one's decisions. Mindfulness is not affected by prejudice, but rather is a clear and accurate analysis that understands the dependently arisen nature of the phenomena of experience. It helps one to understand the impermanent nature of one's physical processes, experiences, thoughts, and emotions and to judge whether they are positive, negative, or neutral. Through mindfulness one recognizes the dynamic and changing nature of physical and mental factors, both of one's own body and mind and the world. In the *Exegesis* (*Atthasālinī*), Buddhaghosa (ca. fifth century) describes it as "not floating away" and states that it involves retaining something in one's awareness and not letting one's attention just

skim the surface of events. Rather, one becomes aware of physical and mental processes in a dispassionate manner, without passing judgment, fully aware of what is happening but not reacting with habitual tendencies.

How are beings reborn if there is no self?

During the Buddha's lifetime, some rival religious teachers questioned how he could declare that beings are reborn despite also claiming that they lack any soul or essence. The same qualm has occurred to countless undergraduates in world religion courses: what is the mechanism of rebirth, and exactly what is reborn? The Buddhist response is that what is conventionally conceived as a person is in fact a psychophysical continuum comprised of successive moments of physical states, thoughts, emotions, and karmic forces. Since you began reading this chapter, countless cells of your body have died and been replaced by cells of similar type and function, thoughts and emotions have arisen and passed away, but overall there has been continuity of both mind and body. From moment to moment – or even day to day or month to month – most of us perceive little change, but if we look back over large stretches of our lives, say twenty years, we can see major differences. There is little that can be discerned in the adult I am today that was a part of the infant I was at the age of two; my emotions have altered, my knowledge and insight into the way things operate have increased, my body is different in virtually every respect, and every seven years or so it has undergone an almost complete replacement of cells. But my mind operates in such a way that I still identify the infant as "me" and consider us to be the same person. The process of constant change while maintaining perceived continuity from moment to moment will continue until the moment of physical death, at which point the matter of my body will be unable to sustain life and will cease to function. My brain – the seat of my emotions and discriminations – will also cease to function, and according to Buddhist doctrine the coarser levels of consciousness will progressively drop away until only the most subtle level of consciousness remains. This will continue to flow, much like a stream of water, which maintains apparent similarity despite changing in every moment. Moved along by the karmas I have generated through volitional actions and the mental states that drove them, this consciousness will be drawn toward a rebirth situation that is concordant with those latent tendencies. If I am to be reborn as a human, for example, it will be attracted to two copulating humans and will enter into a fertilized zygote, where the karmic tendencies will motivate the development of a new consciousness and a range of appropriate emotions, along with an inherited moral profile. The process is sometimes compared to a row of candles, in which each burns down, and as the flame begins to sputter it ignites the wick of the next candle in line. As each candle burns, the flame remains constant, but in burning and melting the wax it changes while still remaining a continuity of flame. It is neither the same flame, nor is it different, just as my next rebirth will be a continuation of the actions and mental states of this life, but the person experiencing their repercussions will have a different name, identity, and appearance.

The Five Aggregates

The sense of self is innate, meaning that all beings implicitly assume that the core of their being is an enduring entity and act accordingly, even if they are unable to articulate this belief consciously, and well before they have been exposed to systems that propound such doctrines. Buddhism claims, however, that no such self is findable either by sense experience or by reasoning. If we search to identify the basis of what we mistakenly believe to be a "self," we will not locate anything that corresponds to it. Instead, we will find a collection of constantly changing aggregates (*skandha*; Pāli: *khandha*) on the basis of which we posit

the self. Traditionally five aggregates are enumerated: (1) form (*rūpa*); (2) feelings (*vedanā*); (3) discriminations (*saṃjñā*; Pāli: *saññā*); (4) consciousness (*vijñāna*; Pāli: *viññāna*); and (5) compositional factors (*saṃskāra*; Pāli: *saṅkhāra*).

Form comprises the matter of our bodies, along with physical qualities like color and shape. It includes things that are seen by the eyes, as well as subtle matter, sounds, tastes, and tangible objects.

The other four aggregates are mental. Feeling is associated with every moment of cognition: it is the tendency to experience things as either pleasurable, unpleasurable, or neutral. The pleasurable encompasses things that one wants to continue to experience – or to encounter again after they cease. The painful is that which causes distress, boredom, physical or emotional pain, and that one wishes to avoid when it arises. The neutral includes sensations to which one is indifferent. All three types are the fruition of past karmic deeds of body, speech, and mind.

Discriminations are associated with all moments of consciousness, which differentiates them into categories such as "tree," "blue," "friend," "frightening," etc. This is the aspect of cognition that labels and categorizes sensations.

Consciousness comprises the six senses (visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile, gustatory, and mental) and includes aspects of cognition that are generally categorized as unconscious in Western psychology. One's consciousness is influenced by past volitional actions and moral decisions and in Buddhist psychology is conceived as a continuum that is changing at every moment. We fall into habitual patterns, and so there is a general continuity of consciousness because it tends to perpetuate attitudes and types of actions, even when these prove to be counterproductive. Unless one engages in deep analysis of one's attitudes, mental afflictions, actions, and decision processes, there is no hope of making significant changes, and much of Buddhist meditation practice is concerned with identifying the mental afflictions that lead to negative states of mind and corresponding actions, presenting antidotes to them that are designed to initially weaken their force and gradually eliminate them altogether. One can begin to make positive changes at any moment, and when one restrains oneself from generating negative emotions and performing actions that result in painful situations, one can then cultivate positive attitudes and states of mind, which result in peace and happiness.

Buddhist meditation theory identifies a range of mental afflictions (*kleśa*; Pāli: *kilesa*) that motivate beings to engage in actions that harm others. The test of skillful or unskillful actions is pragmatic: those that lead to suffering for others or oneself, that result in negative attitudes and unpleasant retributions, are unskillful and should be avoided. Those that promote peace and happiness, that make one more compassionate and at ease, are positive and ought to be cultivated. Attitudes like pride, jealousy, hatred, lust, envy, spite, miserliness, distraction, and resentment motivate beings to engage in negative actions. Love, compassion, and morality are the bases of skillful actions.

The three main afflictions are the "three poisons": desire, anger, and delusion, and the various negative attitudes identified in Buddhist meditation theory can be allocated to one of them. Desire is an attitude of grasping after transient things like material goods, sex, or power; it motivates beings to acquire them at the expense of others. Anger includes attitudes like resentment, hatred, bigotry, and envy; it causes beings to view others as possessing things that one desires or to try to eliminate them because they are a threat to one's own happiness. Delusion causes one to perceive things that are impermanent (such as temporary pleasures or one's body, goods, or abilities) as permanent, to conceive of things that are

selfless as having a self, to consider things that lead to suffering as sources of happiness, to view things like physical bodies (which are composed of various disgusting substances like flesh, blood, bile, and snot) as inherently desirable and to reject the religious path, which is the only way to true and lasting happiness.

Compositional factors include karmic latencies, the tendencies generated by volitional actions that promote habits of thought and behavior. Also included are emotional propensities, such as anger, pride, aggression, and lust, which directly or indirectly lead to initiation of action.

The aggregates are momentary, and although there is continuity from one moment to the next, all are in an ongoing state of flux. But the innate sense of self imagines an unchanging, permanent, and enduring essence. Buddhism claims that the only constant is change and that the matter of our bodies, our emotions, our mental states, and every other aspect of our psychophysical continuums alters slightly from one moment to the next. If there were some disembodied, unchanging entity that somehow followed along with this process of change, it could have no real relation to it, because if it did it too would have to change. Moreover, it is impossible to experience the self with the senses, nor can it be discerned by the mind (though we may mistakenly imagine it). All that can be found under analysis is the aggregates – the components of the psychophysical continuum. If a self did exist, it would have to be the same as at least one of them, but when we examine each individually, none can do the work attributed to the self. The body changes in every moment, with cells dying and being replaced by new ones. If we examine the workings of the mind, we see that thoughts come into awareness and then pass away in a ceaseless stream, emotions fluctuate, and even habits can change as a result of either shifting attitudes or conscious decisions. If there were some nonphysical, nonconscious entity corresponding to the sense of self, whatever else it is, it would not be me, since every aspect of my existence is characterized by change.

The false idea of self is considered by Buddhists to be the root of negative attitudes and actions and the source of suffering. Because I cling to the notion of "I" and "mine," I tend to grasp things and become upset when I lose them or when "I" am subject to situations that are unpleasant. The notion of self is conducive to unrealistic expectations and to dissatisfaction. Although it seems to most people to be the most important aspect of their being, when they finally realize it for the falsehood that it is, they experience a sense of peace and relief, and not of loss. For advanced Buddhist meditators, there is no sense of something being lost in no-self; rather, one is liberated from a debilitating affliction that has caused untold suffering and that has led to countless lives in which one has suffered during birth, has been wracked by illness, been tortured, experienced the heartbreak of separation from loved ones, has grown old and died, only to begin the cycle again, driven helplessly by mistaken thoughts and habits. When one overcomes the false notion of self, one can begin to take control of one's life-process and make real progress in religious practice, which will lead to calm, to happiness, and eventually to nirvana.

Why attain nirvana if it means losing your soul?

People raised in cultures in which belief in an enduring self or soul is a part of the dominant religious tradition(s) often find the Buddhist doctrine of no-self deeply unsettling. While Buddhists view it as a liberating notion, one that frees us from misguided adherence to a belief that causes suffering and disappointment, many non-Buddhists question why someone would want to become an arhat and thus put an end to the cycle of birth and death – particularly because the Buddha and Buddhist tradition are rather vague about exactly what nirvana is like. When asked by the wanderer Channa whether an arhat continues to exist or not after nirvana, the Buddha replied by asking him where a fire that has been extinguished goes: does it travel to the north, south, east, or west? In response, Channa answered that the question had been improperly framed and that it was based on the mistaken notion that an extinguished fire goes somewhere; it simply ceases to burn. In the same way, the Buddha replied, the question of what happens to the arhat after death – whether he or she continues to exist or not – is based on a similar error, the notion that the arhat existed in the first place. The Buddhist doctrine of no-self rejects the idea that there is an eternal essence that exists apart from the body and that moves to a new existence after the body dies. It is incorrect to say that the arhat who enters nirvana has ceased to exist, because he or she did not exist before that. The notion of "existence" was falsely superimposed onto a constantly changing series of psychophysical moments that never had any connection with an enduring, nonphysical entity corresponding to the notion of a "self" or "soul," and so it is not the case that the arhat exists prior to nirvana and then ceases to exist after attaining it. Nirvana is not the destruction of anything or a place where one goes; it is the absence of the causes of suffering and repeated rebirth, "the complete cessation of craving, letting it go, renouncing it, being free from it, detachment from it" (*Saṃyutta-nikāya* I.136).

No person is destroyed when nirvana is attained, but the last moment of a continuum that was formerly propelled by afflicted thoughts and actions is followed by nirvana. There are no further causes for a next moment based on afflicted thought or grasping, and the Buddha pointedly refused to say whether the arhat exists or does not exist after nirvana. Rather, he declared that nirvana is a state of perfect peace and bliss and that ordinary conceptions of "existence" or "nonexistence" are inadequate to capture it. Ordinary language is designed to describe ordinary things and experiences, but nirvana is utterly transcendent and impossible to conceive for beings who are enmeshed in cyclic existence. It is the highest state, the fulfillment of the religious path, and those who attain it completely transcend suffering.

Cosmology

Buddhist cosmology divides the universe into animate and inanimate things. The animate aspect is viewed as a receptacle (*bhajana*) in which various sorts of beings reside. The physical universe is the result of the interactions and permutations of five basic elements: (1) earth; (2) water; (3) fire; (4) air; and (5) space. There are infinite worlds and world systems, generally corresponding to contemporary astronomy's notions of planets and galaxies. World systems come into being and change over vast spans of time, during which they undergo constant transformation and eventually decay. At the end of a cycle they undergo destruction, and after an interregnum period matter and energy reform into new patterns.

Worlds and world systems provide habitats for an infinite number of beings, which are divided into six main types and grouped hierarchically in accordance with the relative level of good fortune with which each is endowed (which in turn is a direct result of volitional

actions of past lives). From highest to lowest, the six destinies (*gati*) are: (1) gods; (2) demigods; (3) humans; (4) animals; (5) hungry ghosts; and (6) hell beings.

Beings are born as gods as a result of successful attainment of advanced meditative states and accumulation of good karma. Gods have beautiful bodies, their feet never touch the ground, and they live for millions of years in blissful surroundings, but eventually they exhaust the positive karma that led to their exalted state, the garlands they wear wilt and their bodies give off an unpleasant odor, and the other gods begin to avoid them. When they die they sink back down to one of the lower realms. The demigods are immensely powerful beings who are motivated by aggression and resentment, who envy the gods their superior positions and make war against them. For the gods, this is sport because they are unharmed by the conflict, and any injuries they receive quickly heal, but the demigods are maimed and die, and they never manage to defeat their rivals, which serves to intensify their negative emotions.

Humans are situated in the middle of the six destinies, and their lives have a mixture of happiness and pain. Ideally a human should become aware of the unsatisfactory nature of reality through experience of sickness, old age, death, and being forced to endure unpleasant situations and should have enough spare time and sufficient resources to pursue the path to liberation. Gods are so caught up in the myriad enjoyments of their heavens that they remain unaware of the certainty of their deaths until it is too late, and demigods are mired in negative emotions and violent conflicts, which blind them to the self-defeating nature of their actions.

At the lower levels, the intellects of animals are too limited for them to be able to realize the nature and operations of suffering and to pursue religious practice, and their lives are generally pervaded by suffering, conflicts with other animals and exploitation by humans, and negative emotions like jealousy, desire, and ignorance.

Hungry ghosts are portrayed as beings with enormous stomachs and tiny mouths and throats, who are constantly hungry and thirsty but who can never get enough of what they crave. When they obtain food, it turns into noxious substances like pus and blood, and water burns their throats. Beings are born as hungry ghosts as a result of avaricious and selfish actions, their past deeds leading to a rebirth in which they are always angry and hungry and can never satisfy their desires.

Hell beings are at the lowest level; they are born in various hells in accordance with their negative deeds. In some hells they are boiled alive, and in others demons flay them, and then their bodies heal and they are subjected to unspeakable tortures again and again. But even the lowest and most painful hells are not permanent (nor are heavens); when the karma that led to rebirth as a hell being is exhausted, one will be reborn in one of the higher destinies, but unless one changes the habits and attitudes that led to engaging in negative actions, one will remain caught up in a vicious cycle of rebirth, moving upward or downward, experiencing various sufferings and repeated deaths and rebirths.

Abhidharma, "Higher Doctrine"

Around the third century, some schools began creating condensed formulas (*mātṛkā*) that summarized key doctrines from the Buddhist canon. These shortened formulas provided easily memorized synopses of complex doctrinal statements and were often in verse so that they could be chanted. Around the same time, some early Buddhist schools also began composing scholastic texts that codified and systematized the teachings found in their

collections of discourses in an attempt to develop doctrinally consistent interpretations. These systems were referred to as "abhidharma" (see the chapter by Walser in this volume).

One of the main concerns of the abhidharma traditions was to present a coherent theory of dharmas, the constituent elements of phenomenal reality, which include both physical and psychological characteristics.[2] Dharmas are conceived in early abhidharma as the ultimately real building blocks that comprise both physical objects and mental events. Dharma theory is a sort of primitive atomism, with the physical dharmas being conceived as tiny bits of matter (according to one system, a dharma is 1/365th the size of the tip of a dust mote). They also include colors and qualities like hardness and motility. Abhidharma treatises described the dharmas and their qualities, enumerated them, and outlined their functions, and different schools posited varying numbers of dharmas.

Dharmas (except for nirvana, which is a dharma but is unconditioned) are types of experience. They are conditioned by past dharmas, and each dharma comes into existence as a result of past moments of similar dharmas, endures for an instant (which according to one system is 1/60th of the time of a finger-snap), and then passes away, while providing the basis for the arising of successive dharmas of similar type. Dharmas are interdependent basic patterns of experience, and each dharma is a patterned process consisting of momentary events of a particular type, which moves along in a conditioned trajectory.

Abhidharma is particularly concerned with how the mind experiences these processes and interprets them. Abhidharma treatises outline – often at great length and pedantic detail – how the elements of existence form conglomerates and how these are apprehended by the mind. Abhidharma psychological literature minutely analyzes the operations of consciousness and its various typologies and is concerned with how one comes to perceive collections of dharmas – elements that are devoid of personhood and exist only for a moment and then pass away – as constituting an enduring "self" and how one imagines that this self can possess things. Dharmas and their groupings are described as both impermanent and unsatisfactory, and the abhidharma philosophers sought to analyze how sentient beings come to be viewed as desirable and as sources of happiness.

THE MONASTIC COMMUNITY

Shortly after his awakening, the Buddha initiated his five former ascetic companions as the first Buddhist monks. He also created an order of nuns, and according to Buddhist sources both orders grew rapidly. He later ordered his monastic followers to travel and propagate the Dharma, and in the next few centuries Buddhism spread all over the subcontinent of India, and later into surrounding countries.

As numbers grew, tensions developed, questions regarding regulations arose, and as each new issue was brought to the Buddha, he promulgated a rule for the entire community. These are contained in the monastic codes of various Buddhist traditions, which have hundreds of rules and regulations, instructions for settling disputes, and guidelines for living harmoniously in a monastic community. Descriptions of each precept include the circumstances that led to its being promulgated and the consequences of breaking it.

Some of the rules may appear anachronistic or even humorous today; in one section discussing the various permutations regarding sexual activity, for example, monks are forbidden to engage in sexual intercourse, which is then defined in meticulous detail. Any penetration "beyond the width of a sesame seed" constitutes intercourse and is punishable by expulsion from the monastic community. As monks concocted ways of getting around

this prohibition, the Buddha was confronted by various manifestations of sexuality, such as the case of a monk who had sex with his former wife (the justification being that he was only engaging in actions that he had already done before; the Buddha declared that when a monk takes monastic vows this constitutes a definitive break with his previous life, and that any sexual activity from that point is forbidden). There are also Vinaya regulations prohibiting sex with animals, corpses, inanimate objects, and a bizarre range of other things. These may reflect the prolific inventiveness of humans regarding sexuality and may also have been deliberately wide-ranging so as to leave no doubt that any type of sexual activity is antithetical to the monastic lifestyle as conceived by the Buddha and the monks who compiled these treatises.

Most of the regulations are more prosaic and deal with such matters as injunctions to shave the head every fortnight, what sort of robes should be worn, a rule that monks should not eat after midday, instructions regarding comportment and interactions with the laity, and how they should spend their time. Some sound pedantic, but when considered as a whole the Vinaya regulations are clearly designed to promote a harmonious and egalitarian community of religious practitioners and to create a lifestyle for individuals that allows them to devote their full energies to religious practice and to physically and cognitively distance themselves from worldly concerns.

Shaving the head, for example, is eminently practical for a monk or nun: it helps one to avoid spending excessive time washing, trimming, and caring for one's hair, eliminates concerns regarding whether or not one's hairstyle is currently fashionable, and helps to avoid resentment within the community regarding hair density, length, or styling. Similarly, when the Buddha decreed that monks should have two sets of robes and that they should be made from castoff rags and dyed saffron yellow, he provided a system for monks to wear one set of robes and have another available when they became soiled. The requirement that robes be made from discarded fabric ensured that all the monks would have a similar quality of cloth and that their clothing would not be an unnecessary burden on lay donors. Because monks could not eat after noon, they were able to devote most of the day to religious practice.

The Buddha was also acutely aware of the importance of public relations, and most of the times when he directly intervened in disputes were cases in which scandal threatened the order's reputation. He named his monastic followers "beggars" (*bhikṣu*) as a way of reminding them that they survived on alms given by laypeople. In ancient India, there were many groups of wandering religious practitioners who subsisted on food provided by layfolk, and most people made donations to all who were considered sincere practitioners of unblemished moral character. A mendicant or group that was perceived as morally lax or as simply looking for a free handout could easily be shunned by potential donors, and so the Buddha was adamant that his community must have a reputation for propriety and uprightness. The monastic code is intended to maintain not only the appearance of propriety, but to ensure that it is preserved in fact. It is meant to promote a disciplined, self-controlled state of mind and way of life that results both in mental calm and in dignified outward comportment. By accepting and regularly reciting the rules, monks become more mindful of their conduct and cultivate corresponding moral qualities.

Monks and nuns are characterized as "fields of merit" (*puṇya-kṣetra*) because gifts given to them yield greater merit than those given to less worthy recipients. Just as seeds planted in fertile soil produce more and better crops than those scattered on marginal land, when one gives alms to monastics who have maintained their purity one receives a greater harvest of merit in return. In addition, if one gives to an unworthy recipient, there is a good chance that

one might later regret the gift, but if one gives to a pure and admirable person one will continue to feel good about the action. In Buddhist societies, monks and nuns play a crucial role in providing laypeople with opportunities to make merit (see the chapter by Osto in this volume). For this reason, in Theravāda countries it is traditional for monks not to thank donors for gifts, because they reap rewards through their donations. The fact that a monk has maintained a difficult collection of rules of conduct and has studied and transmitted the Dharma means that he is a resource for the entire community and for the world as a whole, and lay donors should feel grateful to be given the opportunity to support him in his endeavors.

Contemporary Trends

In the Vinaya texts, monastic ordination is presented as a lifelong commitment, but today it is common for people to give back their vows and return to lay life. In Thailand, for example, young men are expected to take ordination and live as monks for the period of the rainy season retreat (about three months) at least once in their lives. This brings merit to them and their families and is regarded as a rite of passage. Because of the merit associated with ordination, sickly children are sometimes ordained and remain monks or nuns until the danger to their health is deemed to have passed.

Among Tibetan Buddhists, it is common for the third or fourth son to be given to a monastery in order to avoid dividing the family's land among too many inheritors. It also brings merit to the family, which generally is expected to support him. Most Tibetan Buddhists remain monks for life, but if they find that they are unsuited to the lifestyle they may return their vows – ideally to the preceptor who gave them – and resume lay life without any stigma attaching to their decision. Some may later decide to retake the vows, but most teachers will only give ordination to an individual twice because the monastic life is presumed to be a sincere commitment.

In Japan, adherence to monastic vows has become the exception. It is generally assumed that the world has entered a period of "degenerate dharma" (*mappō*; Chin. *mofa* 末法) and that humans are now too depraved to live up to the standards of the past. Because of this notion, it is not uncommon for Japanese men to take the Vinaya ordination, promising to abstain from sexual intercourse, and then marry and raise families.

Another common practice in Japan is conferring ordination posthumously on someone who has died. The standard ordination ceremony is performed for the corpse, and the precepts are read. The deceased is asked whether he or she can maintain them, and silence is taken as assent. Because one makes more merit by actually keeping the precepts – and a corpse is unlikely to violate them – this practice is viewed as highly beneficial, and some priests even claim that the deceased becomes a buddha as a result of the ceremony. The new ordinand is given a monastic robe and bowl, as well as an ordination name and certificate (*kechimyaku* 血脈). The corpse is dressed in robes, the head is shaved, and then it is placed in a coffin along with the bowl and ordination certificate.

MAHĀYĀNA

Origins

Despite the efforts of the arhats who attended the first council to create a fixed canon, around the beginning of the first century CE a new wave of texts entitled "sūtras" began to

circulate within the Buddhist community in India.[3] Although the Buddha had passed away several centuries previously, these works purported to have been spoken by him during his lifetime, but they were only revealed to advanced disciples and later hidden until the proper time for their full dissemination.

Conservative elements of the community rejected the new works as obvious forgeries and declared that they were not the "word of the Buddha."[4] The texts themselves indicate that some were the result of visionary experiences, in which the anonymous author traveled to a Buddhist heaven and encountered Śākyamuni Buddha (or in some cases other buddhas) alive and well and still preaching to advanced disciples. Adherents of the new movement referred to it as "Mahāyāna" (Greater Vehicle) and denigrated their opponents as belonging to the "Hīnayāna" (Lesser Vehicle). They characterized their own teachings and practices as being more advanced than those of their rivals and claimed that their vehicle was more expansive and comprehensive than the limited paths of other Buddhists. A standard list of three "greatnesses" asserts that Mahāyāna excels Hīnayāna in: (1) the motivation of its practitioners, which is compassion for all living beings; (2) the wisdom of those who follow it, which surpasses that of Hīnayānists; and (3) the goal of the Mahāyāna path, which is attainment of buddhahood, and not merely nirvana for oneself. "Hīnayāna" is obviously a pejorative term, which was applied to a number of schools and was rejected by them. The only one of these (traditionally eighteen in number) that remains today is the Theravāda, which considers itself to be the only truly orthodox Buddhist tradition and views Mahāyāna as a deviation from the Buddha's teachings.

Tsongkhapa, one of the most influential figures of Tibetan Buddhism, compares the differences between the two vehicles:

> There are low trainees who seek a low object of intention which is a low attainment solely for their own sake – the state of merely extinguishing the suffering of cyclic existence. There are supreme trainees who seek an elevated object of intention, the supreme attainment – the state of Buddhahood – for the sake of all sentient beings. Since there are these two types of trainees, low and high, the vehicles by which they go to their own state are called the Low Vehicle (Hīnayāna) and the Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna).
>
> *Tsongkhapa* (1977: 92)

The Bodhisattva

The ideal of Mahāyāna is the *bodhisattva* (lit. "awakening-being"), who vows to attain buddhahood for the benefit of all living beings. The arhat is denigrated in Mahāyāna texts as a selfish practitioner who only seeks personal salvation and lacks the "great compassion" (*mahākaruṇā*) of the bodhisattva (though it is still admitted that arhats are compassionate, that they help others – at least to a limited extent – and that they have eliminated all mental afflictions and attain nirvana).

The concept of the bodhisattva (Pāli: *bodhisatta*) is not unique to Mahāyāna; it is also found in the Theravāda canon, but there it mainly refers to Śākyamuni Buddha in his past lives. Theravāda holds that only a few exceptional trainees can follow the path of the bodhisattva and become a buddha as Śākyamuni did, but Mahāyāna contends that all beings have the same potential and that all should seek the supreme goal in order to benefit others.

One of the most influential descriptions of the bodhisattva path is Śāntideva's *Entry into the Bodhisattva Deeds*, in which he says of the perfection of ethics:

1. Those who wish to maintain their training must diligently guard the mind. Without guarding the wandering mind, it is impossible to maintain any training.
2. Rutting elephants running wild do not cause as much destruction in this world as that roaming elephant, the unrestrained mind, causes in Avīci and other hells.
3. But if this wandering elephant, the mind, is bound in all places by the rope of mindfulness, then every danger fades, and complete success results.

Bodhicaryāvatāra, 5.1–3

One becomes a bodhisattva at the first dawning of a fundamental reorientation of cognition referred to as the "mind of awakening" (*bodhicitta*). Ordinary beings may engage in charitable acts and work for the benefit of others, but their deeds are always tinged with self-interest and afflicted by aspects of negative mental states. Bodhisattvas, by contrast, take a vow to do whatever is necessary to attain buddhahood so that they can be of maximum benefit to suffering beings. This is a momentous aspiration, because most schools of Buddhism agree that the minimum period of time from the inception of the mind of awakening to attainment of buddhahood is three "countless eons" – the amount of time between the creation of the universe and its destruction. As a measure of how long this is, it is said that if a bird were to fly over the Himalayas once every hundred years trailing a fine silk scarf that lightly brushes the tops of the mountains, they will be worn down in one countless eon. Thus, the bodhisattva is committed to religious practice over an unimaginable period of time, during which he or she gradually cultivates the qualities of buddhahood.

The Six Perfections

The core qualities of buddhas are the six (and sometimes ten) perfections (*pāramitā*): (1) generosity; (2) ethics; (3) patience; (4) effort; (5) concentration; and (6) wisdom.[5] Generosity is an attitude of being willing to give away whatever one has – even one's body or life – to help others. Mahāyāna literature abounds with stories of the exceptional generosity of bodhisattvas and how they will sacrifice everything to alleviate suffering. Generosity adds to one's store of merit and also transforms the character of one's mind. It serves to purify mental afflictions and leads to lack of attachment toward worldly things and greater sensitivity to the sufferings of others.

Generosity is also a basis for cultivation of morality, which begins with restraining oneself from physically committing negative deeds. After this one gradually eliminates the mental tendencies that lead to such behavior. Morality is the precondition for successful meditative practice because it produces a mind that is at ease. Actions that harm oneself and others stem from mental impairments and reflect a mind that is churned up with negative thoughts and desires. When these are overcome, one develops a profound calm and peacefulness, which are necessary for the concentration required for meditative practice.

Patience is also a precondition for following the Mahāyāna path, which requires many lifetimes of devoted application to practice, along with myriad difficulties and potential setbacks. Bodhisattvas understand that all phenomena are dependent arisings and that beings act as they do because of past conditioning, and so they do not take insults and

physical attacks personally, but rather bear them with equanimity while working to alter the motivations of those who attack them.

One also needs a sustained effort and unflagging enthusiasm to follow the path to buddhahood, to devote one's present and future lives to pursuit of the ultimate attainment for the betterment of others.

After cultivating the first four perfections, bodhisattvas have laid the foundations for successful meditative practice. While these six qualities are perfected sequentially, with one providing the basis for cultivating successive perfections, bodhisattvas train in all of them throughout their careers.

The perfection of concentration is the ability to focus the mind one-pointedly on meditative objects without wavering or losing attention. In order to pursue this perfection, one withdraws from the world into solitude, but later returns to society with a mind that is calm and alert.

The perfection of wisdom is the culmination of the previous perfections and requires them as its basis. Through meditation involving analysis of the true nature of phenomena, the bodhisattva directly perceives that they are empty of inherent existence, that they arise and pass away in dependence upon causes and conditions. At first this is merely an intellectual process, referred to as "knowledge arisen from hearing." This is the result of listening to a description of the empty nature of persons and phenomena and recognizing its validity. In the next level, "wisdom arisen from thinking," one deepens this insight and gains an intuitive understanding of emptiness. The third level, "wisdom arisen from meditation," involves repeatedly contemplating emptiness until one's perception of reality is altered and one no longer imagines even the most subtle selfhood in the phenomena of experience, but instead develops a vision of reality that recognizes the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the universe and sees things not as fixed entities, but rather as interconnected nexuses of causality, with each thing acting on other things and in turn being conditioned by them. This is the way buddhas perceive reality, and when a bodhisattva fully perfects wisdom, he or she also attains buddhahood.

Perfection of Wisdom Sūtras

Like the discourses in the Pāli canon, the Mahāyāna sūtras begin with the formula: "Thus have I heard at one time …" They also contain many of the same doctrines as the earlier discourses, but are often much longer and propound new teachings (or new permutations of existing doctrines) and practices. The earliest extant version of these sūtras was probably the *8,000 Line Perfection of Wisdom Discourse* (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*), which was most likely composed in the first century CE. Dated Chinese translations of early Mahāyāna sūtras show that as new doctrines and practices developed in India, the texts were retroactively rewritten to include them. The sūtras were fluid texts that circulated within the Mahāyāna community, which augmented and redacted them.

There are a number of works that refer to themselves as "Perfection of Wisdom sūtras," ranging in size from a massive 150,000 stanza text to the *Perfection of Wisdom in One Letter* (the letter A). One of the most important is the *Heart of Perfect Wisdom Discourse* (*Prajñā-pāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra*), which condenses the core doctrines of this vast literature into about one page. The Perfection of Wisdom texts are particularly concerned with the ramifications of the doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), which holds that phenomena lack inherent existence. These texts – as well as the philosophical schools that viewed them as

canonical – critiqued the Abhidharma philosophers for conceiving of dharmas as ultimately real things endowed with inherent nature (*svabhāva*). Extending the notion that collections of phenomena lack a self, the Perfection of Wisdom texts contend that dharmas also constantly change and utterly lack inherent nature.

The Perfection of Wisdom texts declare that cultivation of wisdom enables sages to perceive reality as it is. The final nature of things is "suchness" (*tathatā*), which is equated with emptiness. Those who directly perceive suchness eliminate mental afflictions and free themselves from false attachment to themselves and material things. Suchness is completely transcendent and cannot be captured by ordinary conceptuality or language; it can only be known through intuitive insight gained by meditation on the final nature of phenomena.

New Mahāyāna sūtras continued to appear in India until sometime around 650 CE. Some developed into enormous collections of texts like the *Heap of Jewels* (*Ratnakūṭa*) corpus, which includes a number of independent works. As new philosophical schools emerged, new sūtras were composed that valorized their doctrines and practices and denigrated those of other Mahāyāna groups. An example is the *Discourse Explaining the Thought* (*Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra*), the main scriptural source for the Yogācāra school, which claims that the Buddha taught his doctrine in three cycles of teaching, referred to as "wheels of doctrine" (*dharma-cakra*). The first was the teachings of the four noble truths, dependent arising, and no-self found in the early sūtras; the second was the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras, which challenged aspects of these earlier teachings and were given to more advanced disciples; and the third wheel is the *Discourse Explaining the Thought* and related texts, which provide definitive statements regarding the Buddha's final and nonprovisional thought.

How does Mahāyāna differ from earlier traditions?

Mahāyāna was a broad-based movement, largely led by monks but with expanded roles for the laity. Early Mahāyānists appear to have belonged to local cults devoted to worship of stūpas and certain texts. One distinctive feature of this movement was a reinterpretation of the Buddha, who was no longer conceived as a merely human teacher. Mahāyāna sūtras present him as a cosmic being who is able to abrogate the laws of space and time and who possesses godlike powers.

Some Mahāyāna texts further declare that buddhas have three bodies (*trikāya*), which are the result of their accumulation of vast stores of good karma over innumerable lifetimes, along with cultivation of moral qualities and wisdom: (1) emanation bodies (*nirmāṇa-kāya*), for example Śākyamuni, who is now conceived as a physical manifestation created in order to teach the Dharma to trainees who are unable to perceive his true form; (2) the enjoyment body (*saṃbhoga-kāya*), which is composed of pure energy and is not subject to decay like physical bodies and which resides in a "pure land"; and (3) the truth body (*dharma-kāya*), which is identical with ultimate reality.

In the *Lotus Sūtra of True Doctrine* (*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*), the Buddha declares to an astounded audience on Vulture Peak that he did not really die, but only appeared to do so in order to help his followers avoid complacency. Moreover, he became a buddha in the distant past and only manifested himself in India as a sort of holographic projection that showed humans the pitfalls of cyclic existence, the futility of the extremes of hedonistic indulgence and asceticism, and the way to nirvana. His lifespan is immeasurable, and he continues to work in countless world systems for the benefit of sentient beings. Since faking his own death, he resides in a pure land where he remains accessible to advanced disciples.

The *Lotus Sūtra* further asserts that the Buddha taught the path of the arhat as an expedient device, along with another path leading to the state of a solitary realizer (*pratyeka-buddha*), which requires more time than attainment of arhathood and leads to acquisition of greater wisdom and supernatural powers, but also culminates in nirvana. The Buddha taught the path of the bodhisattva for more advanced trainees, but in the final analysis here is only "one vehicle" (*eka-yāna*), the Mahāyāna vehicle of the bodhisattva who strives for buddhahood for the sake of all beings. The other two paths were expounded for those of weak resolve who would become despondent as a result of the effort required for the bodhisattva path and the amount of time needed to complete it. For them, the Buddha said that it is possible to find salvation in as little as three lives as an arhat, but after they have attained nirvana arhats are awoken by buddhas and informed that their path has only just begun, and at this point they enter the Great Vehicle and generate the mind of awakening.

The *Lotus Sūtra* confronts the obvious charge that the Buddha is deliberately lying to his disciples, but rejects it. The three vehicles are an example of the Buddha's "skill in means" (*upāya-kauśalya*) – his ability to cleverly adapt his message to the capacities and proclivities of any person or audience. In a famous analogy, the *Lotus Sūtra* compares the Buddha to a father whose three sons are playing in the family home, which unbeknownst to them is on fire. So caught up in their play that they fail to perceive the imminent danger, the boys do not even hear their father's calls to run from the house. Knowing that each of them desires a particular kind of cart, he offers one a cart pulled by oxen, another a cart pulled by goats, and the third a cart pulled by deer. When they hear this, the boys run from the house and their lives are saved, following which he gives them all ox carts, which are the best.

When asked by the Buddha whether the father is a liar, the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara replies, "No indeed O Lord!" and explains that the father, motivated by concern and compassion, employed a skillful ruse to rescue them and can in no way be faulted by his actions. Rather, it was his insight into their natures that allowed him to save them from danger. In the same way, sentient beings are caught up in transient concerns and fleeting pleasures and so fail to recognize that cyclic existence is like a burning house and that they could die at any moment. Standing outside the conflagration of passions and delusions, the Buddha takes pity on them and teaches various expedient doctrines in order to lead them gradually to the ultimate state of buddhahood, in which one transcends all danger and works for the benefit of others who are still caught in the inferno of cyclic existence.

Pure Land Sūtras

According to Mahāyāna buddhology, bodhisattvas accumulate vast stores of merit during the countless lifetimes they spend training in the six perfections and performing limitless deeds for the benefit of others. This merit can be transferred – much like money in a bank account – but because of the compassionate intention of the giver, the store of merit actually increases when one makes such a transfer of karmic funds. When a bodhisattva attains buddhahood, he or she creates a "pure land," designed for a specific type of trainee (the chapter by Jones discusses this in greater detail). Some of these are world systems like the one we inhabit, while others are wondrous heaven realms in which the conditions for attaining buddhahood are optimal, and those fortunate enough to be born there have vast lifespans, perfect bodies, unlimited resources, and a capacity for advanced religious practice.

A number of these pure lands are described in Mahāyāna texts. The most popular is Sukhāvatī (Joyous Land), which was created by the buddha Amitābha (Limitless Light).

According to the *Larger Discourse on the Array of the Joyous Land* (*Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra* – which declares that it was spoken by Śākyamuni Buddha on Vulture Peak to a huge audience of advanced disciples – in the distant past a monk named Dharmākara was a follower of the buddha Lokeśvarāja (World Sovereign King). Dharmākara asked him to describe the wonders of the pure lands of various buddhas, and Lokeśvara complied. Dharmākara witnessed a vast array of realms created and ruled by buddhas and subsequently spent five eons contemplating what he had learned, making plans for the land he would create upon attainment of buddhahood. This would have all the best aspects of the domains of other buddhas. He then proclaimed a series of vows, describing the wondrous features of his pure land, which included a promise that those who called on him ten times with faith would surely be reborn there, and he further asserted that they would have supreme resources for their pursuit of religious aims and would definitely attain buddhahood in his realm, which would be called Sukhāvatī.

> Vow 18. May I not attain unsurpassable, complete, perfect awakening if, after I attain awakening, sentient beings in other realms who resolve to attain unsurpassable, complete awakening hear my name and think of me with sincere trust will not be met by me at the time of their deaths, and if I will not stand in front of them, surrounded and honored by a retinue of monks, so that they may encounter death without worry.
>
> Vow 19. May I not attain unsurpassable, complete, perfect awakening if, after I attain awakening, sentient beings in limitless numbers of buddha-realms will hear my name, set their minds on being reborn in my buddha-realm and dedicate their roots of merit to rebirth in it, and yet not be reborn in my buddha-realm. May this be so even for those who have only made the resolution ten times… .
>
> *Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra* 28.18–19

The *Smaller Sukhāvatī-sūtra* describes the features of the Pure Land. In Sukhāvatī beings will have no conception of private property, and there will be no hungry ghosts or hell beings. The Dharma will be heard everywhere, and the land will have a multitude of buddhas and bodhisattvas. There will be no gender, and any woman who hears Amitābha's name and feels disgust at the female form will never be reborn as a woman again. The land will be flat (because mountains present an impediment to travel in India) and cool (an obvious attribute of heaven for those who live in the heat of the Indian plains), and the water of ponds and rivers will rise to whatever level one wishes and will be the perfect temperature. There will be abundant resources for everyone, and beings will merely need to visualize the food they like and their hunger will be satisfied.

These texts promise that mechanical practice conjoined with faith can lead to rebirth in Sukhāvatī and that practitioners who are presently unable to make significant progress on the path through their own efforts will be endowed with minds and bodies that are much better suited to religious pursuits and that they will have access to the best resources and teachers. Pure Land practice never developed into a separate tradition in India, but it became popular in China and Japan, where chanting the formula "Praise to Amitābha Buddha" (Chin. Namo Emituofo 南無阿弥陀佛; Jpn. Namu Amida Butsu) is one of the most popular practices for contemporary Buddhists.

Madhyamaka

The "Middle School" (Madhyamaka) was founded by Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250 CE; see the chapter by Walser in this volume), one of India's most influential philosophers. He follows the approach of the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras, which subject phenomena and doctrines to an analysis based on the perspective of emptiness (which holds that all things lack a substantial self, all are dependent arisings, and that words and concepts are merely human constructs, with no ultimate truth value). Nāgārjuna claims to adhere to the Buddha's "middle way," which avoids extreme views and perspectives, and applies the principle to a range of philosophical theories about causality and the nature of phenomena that were current in his day.

Nāgārjuna adopted a *reductio ad absurdum* method (*prasaṅga*) in analyzing philosophical views, which for the sake of argument accepts an opponent's premises and then demonstrates how they lead to contradictions when their full ramifications are developed. When one seeks the meaning of a particular term, one must use other terms, each of which has a meaning that is part of a system of language and shared understandings, and is not independent. Searching for the meaning of one term only leads to other terminological issues with the words one uses to define it. When one adopts one position, an opponent can find implicit contradictions in it, and the same is true of its opposite or any composite of different positions. The Madhyamaka approach points out the contradictions in rival systems, but refuses to adopt any philosophical view itself. Rather, by eliminating various possible views, Madhyamaka philosophers sought to lead others toward nonconceptual direct awareness of the nature of reality, which is emptiness. Emptiness cannot be expressed in words, although analysis can demonstrate that all things – including philosophical views – are brought into being by causes and conditions and have no essence. But full understanding of emptiness requires that one cultivate this realization until one's perceptions are altered in such a way that one no longer imagines that things have independent existence or that words and concepts can adequately express their final nature.

Nāgārjuna was particularly concerned with the dharma theories of the Abhidharma philosophers, who accepted the doctrine of dependent arising but also posited that phenomena are composed of ultimately real dharmas. Nāgārjuna rejected this idea and argued that dharmas also are dependent arisings that only exist for a moment and then pass away. One dharma ceases, and the next moment is of similar type and aspect. Because the sequence of moments is so rapid, it blurs together like the frames of a film, producing the illusion of continuity. Contrary to the Abhidharma thinkers, Nāgārjuna argued that dharmas lack inherent existence (*svabhāva*), which he viewed as a notion that contradicts the Buddha's teachings on no-self. If they had a substantial essence, it would have to exist prior to their appearance, and there would be no need for them to be produced. Similarly, a substantial essence cannot pass away, nor can it change, as phenomena obviously do. Emptiness is also empty, and Nāgārjuna declared that anyone who tries to turn emptiness into another view is "incurable."

Nāgārjuna made a distinction between two levels of truth, conventional truths (*saṃvṛti-satya*) and ultimate truths (*paramārtha-satya*). The former term refers to the things we experience through ordinary perceptions, such as tables, chairs, and people. Conventional truths are able to perform functions conventionally – and so a table, for example, can do the things tables were designed to do, but when one seeks to locate the table itself, what one finds is a collection of parts (which in turn can be further analyzed into even smaller parts)

constructed in a particular pattern. If we take apart the legs and surface, no table is left; "table" is merely a name superimposed onto the collection of parts, but it is utterly devoid of inherent existence. This unfindability under analysis is the ultimate truth of the table, its emptiness. The ultimate reality of every phenomenon is emptiness. Those who fully understand this insight with direct perception can break free from ordinary conceptuality and perceive things as they really are.

Yogācāra

The origins of the Yogācāra (Yogic Practice) school are generally traced to the brothers Asaṅga and Vasubandhu (see the chapter by Gold in this volume), who in their early lives were adherents of non-Mahāyāna philosophical systems and subsequently converted to Mahāyāna. They developed a sophisticated analysis of the workings of consciousness, which was divided into eight types: the five sense consciousnesses and mental consciousness, the "afflicted mind" (*kliṣṭa-manas*), and the "fundamental consciousness" *(ālaya-vijñāna)*. Afflicted mind is a factor of subliminal thought that interprets data from the six consciousnesses to create a version of the world and that establishes categories and patterns. It is the factor that superimposes mistaken impressions on cognitions and gives rise to the false sense of "I."

The fundamental consciousness is the most subtle level of mind and is comprised of the "seeds" (*bīja*) of past cognitions and volitional actions. Every action one performs produces a latent effect that predisposes consciousness to generate similar thoughts in the future. Through this process, ingrained attachment to mental formations is perpetuated. Seeds give rise both to consciousnesses and to their objects, and the afflicted mind discriminates them into subject and object, but originally there is only an unbroken flow of experience.

The fundamental consciousness flows "like a river," meaning that as seeds are deposited into it, its composition changes. If one engages in meditation or the practice of morality, for example, one deposits virtuous seeds in the fundamental consciousness, and when one has eliminated all seeds of mental afflictions and ignorance, the fundamental consciousness is transformed into the "stainless consciousness" (*amala-vijñāna*), which is equated with attainment of buddhahood.

The fundamental consciousness plays several important roles in Yogācāra. In Buddhist meditation literature, a number of trance states are described in which consciousness is suspended. If, as Buddhist psychology asserts, consciousness is momentary, and if each moment immediately gives rise to a subsequent one, reemergence of consciousness after a period of suspension becomes highly problematic. Yogācāra epistemology explains the mechanism for a yogi arising from advanced meditative states with memories and personality traits intact through the theory of the fundamental consciousness, which retains the seeds of past actions and traits until the conditions are right for their fruition. When a yogi emerges from meditation, the seeds that were held in stasis begin to produce their effects again. The fundamental consciousness also provides continuity from one lifetime to the next; after death it continues to flow, propelled by ripening seeds, and a new personality and perception of the world develops.

Yogācāra is often characterized as an idealist system because it is primarily concerned with the operations of consciousness and not the ontological status of external objects. Some Yogācāra texts propound the doctrine of "cognition-only" (*vijñapti-mātra*), which holds that the worlds that living beings inhabit are productions of consciousness. Living

beings respond to their environments on the basis of data from the senses, which are interpreted by the mind. But we have no direct access to external objects. Rather, sense organs react to various stimuli and then send electronic signals to the brain, which sorts them out and uses them to create images of "reality." Everything we have ever experienced is a mental impression, and our perceptions are entirely mental productions. We are completely unable to experience anything in the external world directly (without the mediation of our sensory apparatus and the constructing operations of mind), and we have no way of knowing if others have the same perceptions as we do. The part of the light spectrum I perceive as blue, for example, may appear to someone else as red does to me, but because we both agree that we perceive the same stimulus, there is no way of knowing exactly what is actually appearing to the other.

Yogācāra is primarily concerned with analysis of how the mind works, how we sort the myriad sense impressions and mental interpretations into a coherent "world," and how consciousness can be retrained to eliminate the negative aspects of its operations. Some Yogācāra texts declare that external objects do not exist, but there is considerable dispute among contemporary scholars regarding whether this should be construed as a commitment to idealism or perhaps a type of phenomenology that leaves aside or "brackets" the question of the ontological status of external objects.

VAJRAYĀNA

The Tantras

Toward the end of the seventh century, a new wave of texts attributed to the Buddha (and sometimes to other buddhas) began to circulate in India. Most were entitled "*tantra*s," and they used the opening formula of sūtras, "Thus have I heard at one time… ." The tantras followed the general outlines of Mahāyāna philosophy and practice, particularly the ideal of the bodhisattva, but presented new techniques that were claimed to be more effective than those found in the earlier Mahāyāna discourses. The time required for attainment of buddhahood is said to be a minimum of three countless eons, but tantric texts claimed that their practices could shorten this to one human lifetime.

Adherents of tantric practices commonly refer to their tradition as "*Vajrayāna*" (Adamantine Vehicle) or "*Mantrayāna*" (Mantra Vehicle). The *vajra* is a core symbol of tantra: it is the hardest substance, one that cannot be destroyed by anything. It is conceptually linked with the mind of a buddha, which is an indissoluble unity of wisdom and compassion perfected to the highest degree. In tantric iconography, the vajra is a five-pronged scepter. It symbolizes the method aspect of buddhahood (compassion and skillful means). A bell represents the wisdom aspect. Mantras are prayers or invocations to buddhas who are the focal points of tantric practice; chanting a buddha's mantra creates a karmic connection and attunes the practitioner's mind to the qualities of buddhahood.

Tantric practices include use of visualizations, symbolic diagrams called *maṇḍala*s, rituals, mantras, and *mudrā*s (hand gestures that represent various aspects of Vajrayāna theory and practice). In the tantric practice of deity yoga (*devatā-yoga*), a practitioner visualizes him- or herself as a buddha, endowed with the physical and spiritual qualities of buddhas, and engaging in the deeds of a buddha. This often involves creating a special ritual space, wearing special clothing, and chanting mantras. In the first level of deity yoga practice, the generation stage (*utpatti-krama*), one mentally creates a vivid image of a

buddha in front of oneself, and then progressively expands the vision to include various physical and mental qualities, as well as a retinue of other buddhas and bodhisattvas. They are commonly arranged in a maṇḍala, a circular diagram enclosed within four square sides that may contain hundreds of figures representing various aspects of tantric theory and practice. One perfects this stage when one can see the whites of the eyes of every figure of the maṇḍala and all other details are clear and vivid.

In the second level of the visualization, the completion stage (*niṣpanna-krama*), one imagines that the buddha merges with one's own body and that one is physically and mentally transformed into a buddha. One views one's body, speech, and mind as the body, speech, and mind of a buddha, and one mentally performs compassionate deeds for the benefit of all living beings. This practice is designed to familiarize the meditator with the actual state of buddhahood and not just with concordant attributes like the six perfections. The perfections, along with other attributes of buddhas, are acquired through tantric practice, but one mainly trains in the result of the path – buddhahood – and not qualities that are associated with it. Just as a person who wishes to become a violin player must physically play a violin in order to achieve this goal, so tantric practitioners devote themselves to the practice of buddhahood. An aspiring violin player may profitably listen to great performances on a CD, study the biographies of past virtuosos, and learn the physics of violin construction, etc., but none of these things can substitute for actual practice with a violin.

Similarly, one will progress much more quickly if one studies under a master who is a proficient player and who also is able to teach others. In the same way, Vajrayāna practitioners require a spiritual master (*guru*), preferably one who has followed the path successfully and is skilled in explaining it to students. The guru plays a central role in Vajrayāna and is said to be the embodiment of buddhahood for the practitioner.

In *guru-yoga*, one of the central practices of Vajrayāna, trainees visualize the guru as a buddha, surrounded by a retinue of other buddhas and fully endowed with all the exalted qualities of an awakened being. A number of texts claim that trainees who are successful in imagining that their teachers actually possesses these qualities will spontaneously manifest them in their own psychophysical continuums. Failure to do this – even if one's guru is not in fact a buddha and has obvious flaws – results in students taking on the faults that they attribute to the guru. Thus tantric texts advise aspirants to choose teachers wisely, because it is easier to imagine an accomplished practitioner as a buddha than one who is not.

Origins

The origins of Vajrayāna are unclear and have been the subject of considerable controversy among scholars. When the Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664) visited the Indian subcontinent from 629 to 645, he traveled widely and wrote a detailed chronicle of Buddhist practitioners and sites, but there is no mention of tantrists. When another Chinese pilgrim named Wuxing 無行 (d. 674) visited India about forty years later, however, he reported that tantric texts and practices had become part of the mainstream in north Indian monastic universities. Tibetans began importing Buddhism during the seventh century, and the earliest Tibetan translations of tantric texts were done in the eighth century. Chinese translations of tantras appeared around the same time, and the lack of previous evidence of Vajrayāna, coupled with several indications of its existence around the end of the seventh century, suggests that its appearance was quite rapid, occurring over the course of several decades. For the next several hundred years, a large corpus of tantras and commentaries

were composed in India, and their production continued until at least the twelfth century. During the eighth and ninth centuries, the monastic university of Nālandā was one of the main centers of tantric activity in India, but it was later eclipsed by Vikramaśīla. The destruction of Vikramaśīla by Muslim invaders in 1203 was one of the most significant events in the decline and disappearance of Vajrayāna in India.

Initiation

Vajrayāna texts represent this vehicle as a secret tradition, and only those who receive initiation (*abhiṣeka*) are qualified to engage in tantric practices. Initiation is given by a guru, who was also initiated by his or her teacher. Tantric lineages are often traced back to buddhas, who transmitted texts and practices to human masters, and they in turn passed them on to their disciples. Only certain trainees are "fit vessels" for tantric lore. Several tantras declare that their teachings are reserved for the spiritual elite and that only those with unusually keen compassion who wish to attain buddhahood as quickly as possible in order to help suffering beings should even consider approaching a guru for initiation. Initiates are sworn to secrecy, and various punishments are described for those who openly disseminate tantric lore.

Some passages of tantric texts openly flaunt social norms, such as when the *Hevajra-tantra* exhorts trainees:

> You should kill living beings.
> You should speak lying words.
> You should take what is not given.
> You should frequent others' wives.
> (II.3, 29)

In the following verses, the Buddha explains that "killing living beings" involves cultivating "singleness of thought"; "speaking lying words" refers to the vow to save all sentient beings; "what is not given" is a woman's bliss (in sexual yoga); and "frequenting others' wives" is meditation focused on Nairātmyā, Hevajra's consort, a buddha in her own right who is an important figure in this tantric cycle.

Other passages in tantric texts that enjoin antisocial behaviors were probably meant to be taken literally. Some describe tantric "feasts" (*gaṇacakra*) in which semi-naked tantrikas wearing animal skins engaged in orgies, often in cemeteries or cremation grounds. The descriptions of these gatherings indicate that they were probably actual events.

The sexual yogas found in some tantric texts are described as powerful skillful means that allow adepts to access subtle levels of mind and to make rapid progress on the path. Vajrayāna texts declare that the nature of mind is clear light (*prabhāsvara-citta*) and that the cognitions of ordinary beings are conditioned by adventitious defilements that obscure the mind's pure nature. According to tantric theory, at certain times coarser levels of mind drop away and the mind of clear light manifests. One of these times is the moment of death, following which beings enter into the "intermediate state" (*antarābhava*; Tibetan: *bar do*), in which they acquire a subtle body that remains for a period ranging from several days to several weeks, following which they are reborn in another material body. Practitioners who recognize the dawning of the mind of clear light for what it is, however, can focus their attentions on it and prolong its manifestation, which leads to advanced levels of attainment and even buddhahood.

The mind of clear light also dawns at the moment of orgasm, and some tantric texts contain techniques for ritualized sex that are designed to prolong the manifestation of this subtle mind, which helps trainees to make rapid progress on the path. Only advanced practitioners should perform these techniques, however, and they can only be done by those who have received instructions and special initiations from a qualified guru. Ideally, trainees of sexual yogas should have directly realized emptiness because these practices involve generating a vivid image of one's tutelary buddha from the wisdom consciousness that directly realizes emptiness and then transforming one's body, speech, and mind in accordance with it.

One of the core doctrines of Vajrayāna is the "nondifferentiability of cyclic existence and nirvana" (*saṃsāra-nirvāṇa-abheda*), which holds that the two are merely perspectives. According to the *Hevajra-tantra*: "Then the essence is declared, pure and consisting in knowledge, where there is not the slightest difference between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*." The perceptions of ordinary beings are clouded by mental afflictions and ignorance, and so they inhabit cyclic existence. Buddhas have eliminated all traces of ignorance and perceive reality as it is, but in the final analysis both live in the same world. Based on this insight, tantric texts describe practices that utilize the things that bind ordinary beings, such as sex, but employ them in ways that contribute to liberation from cyclic existence. As Shakespeare wrote, "there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so." This is the perspective of Vajrayāna, which developed a range of skillful means to free beings from ordinary conceptuality and help them progress quickly toward buddhahood. In the words of the *Hevajra-tantra*: "That by which the world is bound, by the same things it is released from bondage."

Vajrayāna became part of the curriculum of the major north Indian monasteries, which later were the primary conduits for the importation of Buddhism to Tibet. The Tibetans inherited the full range of Indian tantric texts and practices up until the demise of Buddhism on the subcontinent. Vajrayāna was also transmitted to China, and the tantric Zhenyan 眞言 (Skt. Mantra) school briefly flourished during the eighth and ninth centuries. The Japanese monk Kūkai 空海 (774–835) traveled to China in 804 and brought tantric practices to Japan when he returned. He founded the Shingon school, which remains the main tantric tradition in Japan today (see the chapter by Gardiner in this volume).

HISTORY OF BUDDHISM IN INDIA

The Mauryas

Although Buddhism describes the world as a place of suffering, and monks and nuns are encouraged to avoid involvement with it, the monastic order has had a strong connection to rulers throughout its history, and the fortunes of Buddhism have risen and fallen in accordance with the presence or absence of royal support. Several kings were patrons of the Buddha and his followers, including Bimbisāra, who donated a bamboo grove as a retreat center. Later eighteen monasteries were built for the monastic community in his city of Rājagṛha.

His son Ajātaśatru came to power by overthrowing and imprisoning him, and he plotted with the Buddha's cousin Devadatta, who wished to take control of the order. Ajātaśatru later became a supporter of the Buddha, and Devadatta's plans for usurpation came to naught.

Following the Buddha's death, the Mauryan dynasty (324–184 BCE) came to power in northern India and later extended its control over most of the Indian subcontinent. It was founded by Candragupta, who overthrew the last king of the Nanda dynasty and established a capital in Pāṭaliputra. He later defeated the Greek king Seleucus Nikator (305 BCE), which halted the Greeks' advance into northern areas of the subcontinent.

Candragupta was succeeded by his son Bindusāra in 297 BCE. He extended the empire as far south as Mysore and brought most of the subcontinent under Mauryan control.

Aśoka

Kaliṅga, in modern-day Orissa, remained independent, but after Bindusāra died in 272 BCE he was succeeded by his son Aśoka (r. 272–236 BCE), who waged a bloody war with Kaliṅga and annexed it to his empire. Through his conquests, he created the greatest empire on the subcontinent until the British established their rule in the eighteenth century, but after converting to Buddhism he regretted the harm he had caused through warfare and renounced the use of force. He presided over a forty-eight-year reign of peace that became a model for later Buddhist kings. Aśoka left rock inscriptions at various places throughout the kingdom that proclaimed his ruling philosophy, which was based on adherence to Dharma. They describe his policy of rule by righteousness and the belief that practice of kindness, tolerance, and morality are conducive to the well-being of his subjects in both their present lives and thereafter.

One of the most important initiatives credited to Aśoka is his decision to send his son Mahinda (a Buddhist monk) and daughter Saṅghamittā (a nun) to Sri Lanka on a mission of conversion. They arrived on the island around 250 BCE and succeeded in convincing King Tissa to become a Buddhist. Tissa subsequently sponsored the construction of the first monastery in Sri Lanka, the Mahāvihāra, in the capital Anurādhapura. It later became the center of Theravāda orthodoxy in Southeast Asia and played a key role in disseminating Buddhism to neighboring countries. Aśoka also sent Buddhist monks to Burma, and in the eleventh century rulers began to patronize Theravāda. It became the dominant tradition in Thailand in the twelfth century and in the fifteenth century was adopted by rulers in Cambodia. In the Theravāda countries of Southeast Asia, an intimate relationship developed between rulers and the Buddhist monastic order, and particularly in Thailand maintenance of the Saṅgha's purity was considered to be a core duty of kings.

New Dynasties and Foreign Invasions

Aśoka died in 231 BCE and Mauryan power subsequently declined. Several dynasties followed and established control over parts of the former Mauryan empire, including the Śuṅgas and Yavanas (187–30 BCE). Buddhism was persecuted by the Śuṅga king Puṣyamitra (r. ca. 187–151 BCE), but during this time several important Buddhist centers were built, including Bhārhut, Sāñcī, and Amarāvatī. During the second century BCE there were also a number of invasions by Greek armies from Bactria and Parthia, who were able to exploit the power vacuum left by the demise of the Mauryas, as well as invasions by nomadic tribes from Central Asia.

During this time, Gandhāra (located in present-day Afghanistan) became a major Buddhist center. The area was first ruled by Bactrian Greeks, and later by kings of the Śaka and Pahlava dynasties (100 BCE–75 CE). They were followed by the Kuṣānas, a Scythian

tribe from Central Asia, who patronized Buddhism. Under them, Gandhāra grew into one of the main seats of Buddhist art and learning, and some of the earliest images of the Buddha were produced there. By the seventh century CE, however, it had ceased to exist as an independent kingdom, and Buddhist influence disappeared soon after.

In the early medieval period, India enjoyed a time of stability during the reigns of the Guptas and Vākāṭas (ca. 320–550), but after the collapse of these dynasties most of the subcontinent was divided into small kingdoms, which vied with each other for territory and power. The disintegration of central control also had a negative effect on trade and the royal patronage that was required for the maintenance of large monasteries.

The Seventh and Eighth Centuries

Buddhist thought and literature flourished during the medieval period, but records of the time indicate that Buddhism was probably fairly small in terms of exclusively committed adherents. By the seventh century, its major centers were monastic universities, often created and maintained by royal patronage, which attracted students from all over the Buddhist world. The greatest seat of learning at this time was Nālandā, which was founded by king Śakraditya of Magadha in the second century and later patronized by the Gupta (320–647) and Pala (650–950) dynasties. At its height, it had over 10,000 students, teachers, and staff.

During the seventh century, King Harṣa was an important patron of Buddhism, and some rulers of the Pala dynasty funded the construction of monastic centers, including Vikramaśīla (founded ca. 800) and Odantapurī (founded ca. 760).

Demise of Buddhism in India

A number of factors contributed to Buddhism's decline and eventual disappearance in the land of its origin, but the most devastating was a series of invasions of northern India by Muslim armies. Drawn by dreams of plunder and inspired by religious fanaticism, they slaughtered Buddhist monks and nuns in large numbers, ransacked monasteries of their treasures, and burned their libraries.

One of the invaders was the Turkic general Mahmud Shahbuddin Ghorī. His army was accompanied by an official chronicler, who described in enthusiastic detail military campaigns by battle-hardened troops against monastic students and scholars at Buddhist universities, characterizing them as mighty victories yielding vast amounts of booty and defeating non-Muslim infidels. Ghorī sacked Nālandā in 1197 and Vikramaśīla in 1203.

Unfortunately for Indian Buddhism, its most vibrant centers were in the north, directly in the path of the Muslim armies, and centuries of patronage had made them wealthy targets. The fact that they were institutions of non-Muslim religions provided additional justification for the invaders to completely destroy them, and in some cases even the foundation stones were scattered so that no evidence of their existence remained.

Buddhism lacked the wide support of Hindu devotional movements, and its scholastic traditions required well-funded monastic universities with substantial libraries. When these were destroyed, the most vital centers of Indian Buddhism were lost. Buddhism continued to exist in small pockets in various parts of the subcontinent until the fifteenth century, but its decline was rapid following the invasions. When the Tibetan pilgrim Dharmasvāmin

(1197–1264) visited Nālandā in 1235, he met a few monks living with their students among the ruins. During his visit a Muslim raiding party arrived, and they all had to flee.

Some longstanding Buddhist communities have remained at the periphery of the Indian subcontinent up to the present day, in areas like Bhutan, Ladakh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, but after the thirteenth century Buddhism had mostly vanished in the north-central plains. In the twentieth century, a revival of sorts began with people from other Buddhist countries arriving in increasing numbers for pilgrimages, some of whom built monasteries and temples. Following the Chinese invasion of Tibet in the 1950s, more than 100,000 Tibetan Buddhists fled to India and were given land to establish settlements in the northern state of Himachal Pradesh and in the southern state of Karnataka. By far the largest number of contemporary Indian Buddhists are former members of Dalit castes, who followed the example of B.R. Ambedkar (1891–1956), one of the main architects of the Indian constitution, who publicly converted to Buddhism shortly before his death and encouraged other Dalits to renounce Hinduism and its institutionalized discrimination. Today over 5 million former Dalits have become Buddhists.

BUDDHISM IN EAST ASIA AND TIBET

China

Translation of Indian Buddhist texts into Chinese began shortly after the central Asian monk An Shigao 安世高 (d. 168) arrived in the Chinese capital of Luoyang in 148 CE. By the end of the Han dynasty (25–220 CE), a substantial number of Indic texts had been translated into Chinese, but most Buddhists in China were still foreigners. Buddhism faced considerable initial resistance from Chinese, who tended to look down on other cultures and who considered some aspects of Buddhist practice to be problematic. For example, monks and nuns were supposed to subsist on alms, but beggars are disdained in Chinese society (and so most monasteries have been self-sustaining, and begging for alms is rare), they are not allowed to bow down before secular rulers (which was regarded as unpatriotic), and the fact that they are celibate and they shave their heads was regarded as unfilial behavior.

Buddhism began to attract Chinese converts during the Western Jin (256–316) and Eastern Jin (317–419) periods. Some Chinese took monastic ordination, monasteries were built, and more sūtras were translated and then disseminated in southern China. Some members of the educated aristocratic class were attracted to Buddhism because of its large canon, which contains sophisticated philosophical texts and meditation manuals that describe methods for attaining advanced states of consciousness. The uneducated masses were drawn by a pantheon of savior buddhas and bodhisattvas, as well as simple means of making merit and working for a better rebirth. Eschatology was of minimal concern to traditional Chinese traditions like Confucianism and Daoism, but Buddhism had an extensive literature on the topic, along with techniques for being reborn in heaven, improving one's lot in the future, and attainment of buddhahood, all of which appealed to segments of the Chinese population. Some Chinese rulers – particularly those belonging to non-Chinese ethnic groups – also found it useful to patronize Buddhism as a way of offsetting the influence of Chinese philosophical and religious systems.

Many of the early translations of Indic texts employed a technique referred to as "matching concepts" (*geyi* 格義), in which indigenous philosophical terms (mainly Daoist) were equated with Sanskrit technical terms. This helped Buddhism to overcome Chinese

perceptions that it was a foreign religion, but it also distorted the way in which key doctrines were understood by Chinese readers. Nirvana, for example – which refers to a state of perfect peace that is attained after one has eliminated all mental afflictions and cultivated detachment toward worldly things – was translated in some texts as "non-action" (*wuwei* 無爲), the approach to life of the Daoist sage, who allows events to unfold in accordance with the operations of the Dao, without attempting to force them to conform to his wishes. Moreover, buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other Buddhist figures were associated with Chinese deities and Daoist sages, and for many Chinese Buddhism appeared to be merely a foreign version of Daoism.

An important turning point occurred when the monk Kumārajīva (344–413) arrived in China after a difficult journey, during which he was imprisoned by a ruler who feared that he would use the magical powers for which Buddhist monks were renowned to aid a rival prince. During his captivity, Kumārajīva put his time to good use and became fluent in Chinese. When he was released, be set up a translation bureau to render Indic texts into Chinese, and he rejected the "matching concepts" approach, preferring to coin new equivalents that more accurately reflected how technical terms were understood in India.

Kumarajiva's influence helped Buddhism to attract royal support, which in turn led to increasing numbers of converts. During the Northern Wei (386–534), the monastic order became both wealthy and corrupt. This led to a government-sponsored persecution in 446 that lasted for eight years.

The apogee of Chinese Buddhism was the Tang dynasty (618–906). Numbers of monks and nuns increased, as did the size, power, and wealth of monasteries. Buddhism's growing influence led to another government crackdown in 845, the most severe in Chinese history until the devastation wrought by Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893–1976) and the Communists during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. Over 40,000 temples were demolished, monks and nuns were forcibly returned to lay life, images were destroyed, and books were burned. This led to the virtual disappearance of scholastic Buddhist traditions, which relied on large monastic institutions and libraries, but Chan and Jingtu – which could be practiced in private and outside of a monastic setting – survived.

Chan

According to Chinese tradition, the origins of the Chan (禪 Jpn. Zen; Kor. Sŏn) tradition lie in the ministry of the Indian monk Bodhidharma, who arrived in north China between 516 and 526. Regarded as the twenty-eighth Indian patriarch of a tradition that began with Śākyamuni Buddha, Bodhidharma reportedly arrived at Shaolin Monastery (少林寺), where he began eight years of meditating while facing a wall. In order to keep his eyes from drooping, he cut off his eyelids, and when he cast them to the ground, tea plants grew. Their caffeine content has helped successive generations of meditators to stay awake.

His main disciple was Huike 慧可 (487–593), who begged Bodhidharma to instruct him after his arrival in China, but the master ignored his entreaties until he demonstrated his sincerity by cutting off his own arm and presenting it as an offering. Impressed by this extraordinary gesture, Bodhidharma asked Huike what he wished to know. He replied, "My mind is not at peace. Master, please pacify my mind." Bodhidharma replied, "Bring out your mind and I will pacify it for you." Huike responded, "When I search for my mind, I cannot ultimately locate it." Bodhidharma then said, "There, I have already pacified your mind for you" (*Wumen guan*, case 41). Huike had an instantaneous awakening experience.

This exchange is typical of recorded interactions between Chan masters and disciples. Masters often use enigmatic or paradoxical statements to shake their students out of ordinary modes of thinking and free them from conceptual thought. One can only perceive one's "original nature" through direct intuitive insight, and not through reasoning, logic, or verbal instruction. Sometimes Chan masters strike or verbally abuse their students in order to force them to see the reality that is right in front of their eyes. According to Chan tradition, all beings possess the "buddha nature," an innate potential for buddhahood. This is the essence of our being, and it never changes, nor is it newly created through practice. Those who actualize it are buddhas, while those who remain unaware of it are ordinary beings.

> Whenever he was questioned, Chan master Judi would just hold up a finger. One day, one of his students was asked by an outsider, "What is the essential teaching of your master?" The boy also held up one finger.
>
> When Judi heard about this, he took a knife and cut off the boy's finger. As the boy ran out screaming in pain, Judi called him back. When the boy looked back, Judi just held up a finger. The boy was suddenly awakened.
>
> *Wumen guan*, case 3

These notions are obviously at variance with Indian Buddhist doctrines such as no-self and emptiness, but Chan teachers explain the divergences by claiming that their teachings and practices represent the Buddha's ultimate intention, which was only passed on to advanced disciples. Chan claims to be "A special transmission outside the scriptures, directly pointing at the heart of man, looking into one's own nature." According to the *Jingde Era Records of the Transmission of the Lamp* (*Jingde chuandeng lu* 景德傳燈錄), compiled by the Chan monk Daoyuan 道原 (n.d.) in 1004, one day at the beginning of a sermon the Buddha stood before the assembly of monks and simply held up a flower. Everyone was perplexed by this except Mahākāśyapa, who smiled. The Buddha declared that only Mahākāśyapa had understood the purport of his teaching, and this is said by Chan tradition to mark a direct mind-to-mind transmission from the Buddha to him. This continued through a succession of Indian patriarchs up to Bodhidharma, who brought it to China, where the essence of the Buddha's realization was transmitted by him to Huike. Chan tradition also claims some of the leading figures of Indian Buddhism, such as Nāgārjuna, as patriarchs.

During the Tang dynasty, Chan was divided into five "houses" or lineages, only two of which have survived to modern times: the Linji 臨濟 (Jpn. Rinzai), founded by Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄 (d. 866), and the Caodong 曹洞 (Jpn. Sōtō), founded by Dongshan Liangjie 洞山良價 (807–869) and Caoshan Benji 曹山本寂 (840–901). Eisai 栄西 (1141–1215) brought the former school to Japan, and Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253) brought Caodong to Japan following his visit to China in 1223.

Linji/Rinzai is particularly known for its use of enigmatic "public cases" (Chin. *gong'an* 公案; Jpn. *kōan*), many of which are stories of exchanges by Chan masters and their students that express direct understanding of reality as it truly is. They are often enigmatic or paradoxical and can only be understood by those who have transcended ordinary language and conceptual thought. The Japanese Zen master Hakuin Ekaku 白隠 慧鶴 (1686–1768) viewed them as a way to spark "sudden awakening," an experience in which one's true nature is grasped in a flash of insight, referred to as "*kenshō*" (Chin. *jianxing* 見性: "seeing one's nature") or *satori* 悟 (Ch. *wu*: "catching on") in Japanese. Hakuin taught that as one wrestles with the *kōan* and becomes frustrated by all attempts to resolve it through ordinary

ways of thinking, one generates the "great doubt" (*daigi* 大疑), which he said is like a red-hot iron ball in one's guts that one tries to get rid of, but cannot. When the *kōan* is finally resolved through a nonconceptual direct realization of reality, there is a feeling of profound relief and insight.

In contemporary Japanese Zen, both Sōtō and Rinzai claim that their practices lead to sudden awakening and accuse their rivals of promoting gradualism. Rinzai teaches that *kōan* practice precipitates an immediate and often dramatic realization that clears away obscurations, but it admits that the initial experience needs to be deepened and corroborated by subsequent moments of insight. Dōgen claims that the very notion of meditating to attain buddhahood is fundamentally mistaken: one is already a buddha, and when one meditates one is authenticating this reality. The goal of both traditions is to bring the innate buddha-nature to full conscious awareness, to manifest one's potential for awakening in daily life.

Jingtu (淨土; Jpn. Jōdo; Kor.Chŏngt'o, "Pure Land")

The eighteenth vow made by the buddha Amitābha in the *Larger Sukhāvatī-vyūha-sūtra* – which promised that beings who invoked his name ten times with faith and wished to be reborn in his pure land would have their requests granted – is the basis for the formation of the Pure Land tradition in East Asia. The Chinese monk Tanluan 曇鸞 (476–542) was the first to proclaim Pure Land practice as the primary means of salvation for the whole society. He organized devotional groups whose members meditated on Amitābha (Chin. Emituofo; Jpn. Amida) and chanted his name. He divided Buddhist practices into two types – easy and difficult – and said that Amitābha's vows had created an easy path to buddhahood for beings of limited capacities, who could be reborn in Sukhāvatī through simple faith in him and chanting his name. Difficult practices were referred to as the "path of the sages" (*shengdao* 聖道), which was appropriate to the capacities of the Buddha's disciples, but hopelessly beyond those of the present age. He advocated the practice of chanting the formula "Praise to Amitābha Buddha," referred to in Chinese as *nianfo* 念佛 and in Japanese as *nembutsu*.

Subsequent Pure Land developments were increasingly connected with the widespread belief that the world had entered the period of "degenerate dharma" predicted in some Indian Buddhist texts, in which people become so depraved that they no longer have the capacity to practice like the Buddha's disciples, and their diminished moral qualities make negative actions more likely. Daochuo 道綽 (562–645) and his disciple Shandao 善導 (613–681) viewed Pure Land practice as an "easy path" to liberation more suited to humans of the present age and taught that mechanical repetition of Amitābha's name can lead to rebirth in Sukhāvatī, provided that one has sufficiently strong faith.

The Song, Ming, and Qing Dynasties

During the Song (960–1279), Ming (1368–1644), and Qing (1644–1912) dynasties, Confucianism dominated Chinese intellectual life. Confucian scholars controlled the state educational system, and Confucian rites were the basis of the state cult. Despite Confucianism's power and influence, Buddhism also was widely popular throughout China. Although there were many monasteries, monks, and nuns, this was generally a period of intellectual stagnation for Buddhists. There were few significant developments in thought or practice, and the main activity of monks and nuns was performance of rituals. Buddhists

increasingly became associated with mortuary practices, which included ceremonies for the dead to aid them in the next life (see the chapter by Hackett in this volume).

For most Chinese, their three main religious traditions were viewed as aspects of a single religious system. According to the "three traditions" (*sanjiao* 三教) approach that is common among contemporary Chinese, Confucianism provides resources for one's life in society and interaction with others, Daoism is concerned with one's relations with the natural world, and the spells and rituals of Daoist priests ward off evil and offer access to supernatural powers. Buddhism's purview is death and the afterlife. People feel free to emphasize a particular religion at different times of their lives, and it is common for Buddhist temples to display images of Confucian and Daoist deities.

During the Qing dynasty, its Manchu rulers patronized Tibetan Buddhism, and many Tibetan lamas traveled to China. Leading figures like the ninth Panchen Lama, Losang Tubden Chökyi Nyima (bLo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 1883–1937), and Norhla Hutukhtu Trinle Gyatso (Nor lha Phrin las rgya mtsho; Chin. Nona houfo 诺那活佛, 1865–1936), attracted tens of thousands of people at public ceremonies and initiations, and this led to a significant upsurge of interest in Tibetan Buddhism among Chinese. It probably also played a role in the developing conviction that Tibet is an integral part of China, which formed part of the justification for an invasion by Communist forces in the 1950s.

Within China there were important revival movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One of the most influential reformers was Taixu 太虚 (1899–1947), who founded the Chinese Buddhist Society in 1929 and who spearheaded a revival of the Faxiang 法相 school (a tradition of Chinese Yogācāra). He argued that Faxiang is compatible with modern science, and he sought to unify the various Buddhist traditions of China. He had some success in his efforts, but when Mao Zedong and the Communists came to power in 1947, Buddhism was persecuted along with Confucianism, Daoism, and folk religions. Following Karl Marx's doctrine that "religion is the opiate of the masses," Mao declared that "religion is poison," a remnant of China's "feudal" past that must be eradicated in order for the country to progress toward full Communism.

During the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, thousands of monasteries were destroyed throughout the country, monks and nuns were killed or forced to return to lay life, and participation in religious activities was viewed as evidence of "counterrevolutionary" tendencies. During the late 1980s, there was some relaxation of religious persecution in China, but the early years of the twenty-first century have seen a marked increase in government interference in religion. Most observers agree that there is significant repression of religious practice in China today. Buddhism has succeeded in regaining some of its popularity, and temples are often filled with worshipers, but the government is deeply suspicious of any potential ideological threat and is increasingly attempting to curtail religious practice and undermine people's faith in their religious traditions.

Buddhism in Japan

Buddhism first arrived in Japan in the sixth century when the king of Paekche on the Korean peninsula sent Buddhist images and texts to the Japanese emperor, hoping to enlist his support in a conflict with a neighboring kingdom. The mission was unsuccessful, and there was little interest in Buddhism among the royal court until the Sogas proposed to adopt the Buddha as a clan deity. After the Sogas defeated their main rivals, they credited the Buddha for playing a role in their victory and began to propagate Buddhism. Buddhism attracted

some interest among the nobility, but records of the time indicate that Japanese had little knowledge of Buddhism and related to the Buddha as a deity (*kami* 神) from China, which was the most powerful country in the region. Worship of the Buddha and other buddhas and bodhisattvas was linked with importation of Chinese technology and arts, and religious activities followed the patterns of indigenous cults devoted to the *kami*.

By 624 there were 816 monks and 569 nuns in Japan, but Buddhism's appeal lay mainly in the magical powers that were widely attributed to Buddhist monks and artifacts. Ordinations were believed to cure illness, and emperors often sponsored them so that they would receive magical benefits.

The first Japanese ruler to become a Buddhist was Yōmei (用明 (r. 585–98). His son Shōtoku 聖徳 (574–622) became an ardent supporter of Buddhism and is credited with writing a constitution based on Buddhist principles. He also sponsored the construction of temples, sent monks and nuns to China to study the Dharma, and composed several commentaries on Buddhist texts.

After Shōtoku's death, the imperial capital moved to Nara, and royal patronage increased. In 741 Emperor Shōmu 聖武 (724–49) decreed that a network of temples (*kokubunji* 国分寺) would be built at strategically important areas of the country to protect it from invasion. In these temples the *Sūtra of Golden Light* (*Suvarṇa-prabhāsa-sūtra*) was chanted constantly because the text promises that kings who do this will be protected from their enemies.

The Nara Period

During the Nara period (710–794), interest in Buddhism increased among the aristocracy, and six scholastic traditions imported from China dominated Buddhist intellectual life: (1) Ritsu (Skt. Vinaya; Chin. Lu 律), which emphasized monastic discipline; (2) Kegon (Chin. Huayan 華嚴), which was based on the *Flower Garland Discourse* (*Avataṃsaka-sūtra*); (3) Kusha (Chin. Jushe 倶舍), whose main text was Vasubandhu's *Compendium of Higher Doctrine* (*Abhidharma-kośa*); (4) Hossō (Chin. Faxiang), which followed the Yogācāra tradition brought to China by Xuanzang; (5) Jōjitsu (Chin. Chengshi 成實), which was based on the *Establishment of Truth* (*Satyasiddhi*) by Harivarman (ca. seventh century); and (6) Sanron (Chin. Sanlun 三論, "Three Treatises"), which adhered to the Madhyamaka tradition brought to China by Kumārajīva. Although these schools were influential among the literati, their activities were mostly confined to the capital, and Buddhism remained unknown to most Japanese.

During this time, however, some monks began to go out into the countryside and proselytize the masses. Some of them were self-ordained monks called *hijiri* (聖). The most famous *hijiri* was Gyōki 行基 (668–749), who was a civil engineer before becoming a monk and who used his knowledge to help rural peasants.

The Heian Period

During the Heian period (794–1185), the capital was moved to Heiankyō (modern-day Kyōto). Buddhist institutions grew, and many became large landholders. At the same time, imperial influence waned as local chieftains gained power. Some new Buddhist schools were imported from China during this time, including the tantric tradition of Shingon and the scholastic tradition of Tendai (Chin. Tiantai 天台), which was brought to Japan by Saichō 最澄 (767–822). During this time there was an increasing tendency toward

syncretism, and Buddhism adopted native Shintō deities and practices. Shintō *kami* were commonly associated with buddhas and bodhisattvas, and the theory of "original substance and manifest traces" (*honji suijaku* 本地垂迹) was developed. According to this notion, there is a single universal reality that gives rise to both buddhas and *kami*; the Buddhist figures were conceived as universal manifestations, while the *kami* were indigenous to Japan. It became common for Buddhist temples to house Shintō images and for Shintō rituals to be performed in Buddhist precincts.

The Kamakura Period

During the late Heian and early Kamakura period (1185–1333), military leaders increasingly seized power from the aristocracy and made war against each other. Many Japanese became convinced that the world had entered the time of "degenerate dharma," and new schools developed that proposed innovative approaches to this perceived decline. Some, such as Zen, taught that in the degenerate age one must work harder than was necessary in the past because conditions militate against successful Buddhist practice, but others held that only easy practices are efficacious in this time of decay.

Pure Land teachings became increasingly popular, as did the tradition founded by Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–82), who asserted that only the *Lotus Sūtra* can save the beings of the degenerate age. Nichiren was ordained in the Tendai tradition, whose main text is the *Lotus Sūtra*, but he decided that other practices which had been incorporated within Tendai had corrupted it. He taught that people should rely solely on the *Lotus Sūtra* and even wrote letters to the emperor urging him to suppress other sects, by force if necessary. Nichiren proclaimed an apocalyptic vision of the future if Japan did not embrace his views and predicted social calamities, natural disasters, and foreign invasions unless all other traditions were banned and practice based on the *Lotus Sūtra* became normative. He urged his followers to venerate the *Lotus Sūtra* and developed a practice that involved chanting the title of the text (*daimoku*) in Japanese: Namu Myōhō-renge-kyō 南無妙法蓮華經 ("Praise to the *Lotus Sūtra*").

The stridency of his claims earned him many enemies, and under pressure from other Buddhist groups Nichiren was exiled to the island of Sado. Despite this setback, he continued to preach the supremacy of the *Lotus Sūtra* and gained numerous converts. Today movements such as Sōka Gakkai, Nichiren Shōshū, and Risshō-kōseikai that trace themselves back to Nichiren have the largest number of adherents among all Buddhist groups in Japan.

The Tokugawa and Meiji Periods

During the Tokugawa period (1600–1867), warlords seized power from the emperor and Japan entered a feudal period. Buddhism was named the official religion of the Tokugawa shōguns, and all Japanese had to belong to a Buddhist temple. Ironically, Buddhism's rise to supremacy led to decline. People lost interest in it because they were forced to become (at least nominally) Buddhist, and they had to purchase certificates (*tera-uke* 寺請) from temples to prove their membership. Buddhist priests became complacent and lax because they had a guaranteed clientele, and many were unable to explain Buddhist principles or practices. Buddhist temples were arms of the government and were required to record deaths and births and to participate in the government's campaign to eradicate Christianity.

As a result, membership in the Buddhist community became a social obligation for many Japanese and not a matter of personal conviction.

The emperor was returned to power in the Meiji Restoration, which ushered in the Meiji period (1868–1912). The Meiji rulers adopted Shintō as the state religion, and Shintō shrines became the centers of a nationalistic cult centered on absolute devotion to the emperor. This was linked to an expansionist campaign that brought Japanese armies into China and Korea, where they conquered large tracts of territory and annexed them to the growing empire. The militaristic philosophy was expanded during World War II, and the emperor was portrayed as a living god. Following Japan's unconditional surrender in 1945, Emperor Hirohito 裕仁 (1901–1989) renounced his divine status, and during the Allied occupation after the war freedom of religion was mandated. Shintō was no longer the state religion, but Buddhism failed to significantly increase its appeal to the masses of Japanese people.

Today most Japanese associate Buddhism with rituals for the dead, which are commonly performed although most Japanese have little interest in religion. Most surveys of religious attitudes indicate that over 60 percent are indifferent to religion. A survey by the Sōtō Buddhist school found that among Japanese who identify themselves as Buddhists, only 10 percent could even name their sect's main temple or founder. Only about 30 percent of the population professes any religious belief, although participation in religious activities at Buddhist temples and Shintō shrines is widespread.

Pure Land in Japan

The first Japanese to advocate Pure Land practice was Genshin 源信 (942–1017), whose *Essentials of Rebirth* (*Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集) claimed that the difficult training of meditation is only suited to advanced practitioners, but ordinary commoners should develop a sincere attitude of faith in Amitābha and hope to be reborn in his pure land.

One of the most influential figures in the development of Japanese Pure Land was Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212), who spent many years as a monk in the Tendai school but despaired of his ability to attain buddhahood through its difficult practices. He subsequently switched allegiances to Pure Land. During a retreat in a remote valley in which he planned to engage in Pure Land meditation in accordance with precepts set out by Genshin, he found a book by Shandao that advised practitioners to recite Amitābha's name multiple times and contemplate it. After following this program for a short time, he had a powerful conversion experience and subsequently became a Pure Land teacher. He traveled to Kyōto and began proclaiming this practice as an ideal method for commoners. He himself kept the monastic precepts and practiced traditional meditation, but he taught his nonmonastic followers a path based on faith and mechanical repetition of the *nembutsu*.

His disciple Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), the founder of the True Pure Land School (Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗), instituted a significant shift in Pure Land practice. He declared that in the age of degenerate dharma *only* faith in Amitābha and trust in the efficacy of his vows can lead to salvation. He urged his followers to adopt chanting the *nembutsu* as their sole practice, and not merely as an insurance policy in case other techniques failed to achieve results. In the degenerate age, people have no hope of attaining salvation by their own efforts; meditation, study, and even keeping the precepts are misguided attempts to use one's own-power (*jiriki* 自力). Shinran declared that only the other-power (*tariki* 他力) of Amitābha can bring beings to salvation but, in keeping with the notion that Pure Land is an

"easy practice," he also declared that all that is really necessary is one moment of "believing mind" (*shinjin* 信心) in which one is fully convinced of Amitābha's saving power and that it has been extended to oneself. One who has this experience is guaranteed rebirth in Sukhāvatī, and further prayer and chanting of the *nembutsu* is only done as an act of thanks to Amitābha.

Shinran also taught that Amitābha's vow is present in people already, without their having to work at it, and the moment of faith creates a karmic connection between the practitioner and Amitābha, which allows his immeasurable store of merit to eliminate all of one's negative karmas. Once one has experienced believing mind, one cannot backslide, and rebirth in the Pure Land is assured. Pure Land is one of the most popular practices in Japan today, and it has also found numerous adherents in other countries.

Buddhism in Korea

Buddhism was first introduced to the Korean Peninsula from China in 372, when Emperor Fujian sent a delegation led by the monk Shundao to Koguryŏ (the earliest of the "Three Kingdoms," the others being Silla and Paekche). He brought Buddhist images and texts, which he presented to the Koguryŏ king Sosurim (r. 372–384). Later the Serindian monk Mālānanda was able to interest the royal court of Paekche in Buddhism. Buddhism flourished on the peninsula after these two missions, and the rulers of Koguryŏ and Paekche built temples and supported its importation. Buddhism was introduced to Silla in the early sixth century, and it became popular there also.

During the Three Kingdoms period (late fourth century–668), Chinese Buddhist schools were influential in intellectual circles, and a number of Korean monks traveled to China to study. Buddhism was valued for its associations with magic, and its adherents promoted the notion of "state protection Buddhism" (*hoguk pulgyo*).

The Unified Silla and Koryŏ Periods

Silla emerged from the conflicts of the Three Kingdoms period as the dominant power on the peninsula, and during the Unified Silla period (668–918) Buddhism became popular all over Korea. This was a time of intellectual vitality for Buddhism, and it spread from the educated elite to the masses. Silla later collapsed, and King T'aejo (r. 918–943) initiated the Koryŏ period (918–1392). Sŏn was designated the state religion. T'aejo and his descendants patronized Buddhism, but this largesse led to an anti-Buddhist movement among neo-Confucians, which resulted in a persecution during the succeeding dynasty, the Chosŏn (1392–1909). Buddhist institutions were banned from urban areas and had to move to remote places, and numbers of monks and nuns declined significantly. At one point there were only thirty-six operating temples in the country, compared to several hundred during the Koryŏ period.

The Impact of Japan

Buddhism's fortunes revived somewhat during the sixteenth century, when armies of "righteous monks" *(ŭisa)* were at the forefront of resistance to invasions from Japan. Led by the monk Sŏsan Hyujŏng (1520–1604), they waged a guerilla campaign against General Hideyoshi Toyotomi's troops.

During the Japanese occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945, Buddhism suffered from further government persecution. Japanese authorities lifted the restrictions preventing monks and nuns from operating in the cities, but they also instituted a law allowing Korean monks to marry, as is the custom of Japanese Buddhist clergy. This practice became widespread during the period of Japanese rule, but after the invaders were expelled married clergy were seen as a vestige of colonialism, and the Chogye order initiated a campaign to return to traditional Vinaya norms. Today Chogye is the largest Buddhist sect in Korea and controls about 90 percent of all operating monasteries.

The nineteenth century saw an upsurge of interest in Christianity, which presented itself as the religion of modernity and science. Missionaries made rapid progress in conversions in Korea, but in recent decades this has stalled. Today about 25 percent of the population identifies itself with Buddhism, and another 25 percent consider themselves Christians (about evenly split between Protestants and Catholics). The remainder of Koreans report that they are indifferent to religion.

The Early Propagation of Buddhism in Tibet

According to traditional Tibetan histories, the importation of Buddhism to the Tibetan plateau was facilitated by buddhas and bodhisattvas, led by Avalokiteśvara. In the seventh century, Tibet was an expanding military power, ruled by the kings of the Yarlung dynasty. As they battled their neighbors for land and plunder, the Tibetans became aware of their cultural backwardness in relation to the great civilizations at their borders and sought to import learning and technology from them. King Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po, ca. 618–50) – regarded as an emanation of Avalokiteśvara and the first of the three great "religious kings" (*chos rgyal*) – married two Buddhist princesses from neighboring China and Nepal, who brought Buddhist images with them. Traditional histories also report that he supported Buddhism.

The next "religious king," Tri Songdetsen (Khri Srong lde btsan, ca. 740–98), actively propagated Buddhism and is viewed by later tradition as an incarnation of the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. He invited the Indian scholar Śāntarakṣita (ca. 725–88) to Tibet to spread the Dharma, but his arrival coincided with natural disasters, which were interpreted as opposition from Tibet's indigenous demons. He was asked to leave the country, but before he did he advised the king to enlist the services of the tantric master Padmasambhava, who had the power to subdue the forces opposing Buddhism. When Padmasambhava arrived at the Tibetan border, a huge snowstorm was sent by the demons to stop him, but he withdrew into a cave and meditated. The power of his meditation stopped the storm, following which he engaged his demonic opponents in personal combat and defeated them all. As each surrendered, it offered up its "life force," and Padmasambhava allowed it to live after securing a vow that it would henceforth be a protector of Buddhism. Following his victory, Padmasambhava urged the king to bring Śāntarakṣita back, and in 767 the three founded the first monastery in Tibet, called Samye (bSam yas).

During Tri Songdetsen's reign, Buddhist teachers from India and China came to Tibet and attracted followers. The differences between their teachings and practices, however, led to an officially sanctioned debate between Śāntarakṣita's student Kamalaśīla (fl. 740–795) and the Chinese Chan master Heshang Moheyan 和尚摩诃衍. The former advocated a traditional Indian gradualist model of the Buddhist path, in which one becomes a bodhisattva and progressively cultivates the perfections over many lifetimes, culminating in the

attainment of buddhahood. Moheyan, however, propounded a system of "sudden awakening," in which one becomes a buddha all at once in a flash of insight that clears away obscurations and allows one's innate buddha-nature to fully manifest. At the conclusion of their arguments, the king proclaimed that the Indian side was victorious; Chinese Buddhism was declared heretical and banned from Tibet. There is considerable doubt among contemporary scholars that the "debate" ever occurred, but the story is accepted by most Tibetan Buddhists, and from that point Indian Buddhism was viewed as normative and India became the sole source for the importation of the Dharma.

The apogee of royal support for Buddhism came during the reign of the third "religious king," Relbachen (Ral pa can, r. 815–36), who lavishly patronized monks and monasteries. His largesse severely diminished the treasury, however, and prompted a revolt by his ministers, who assassinated him. He was succeeded by Lang Darma (r. 838–42), who withdrew royal support from Buddhism and is reported in traditional histories to have ordered an anti-Buddhist persecution. He was assassinated by a disaffected Buddhist monk, and following his death the dynasty collapsed. Tibet then entered an interregnum period, during which there was no central authority.

The Later Propagation

The period of the "religious kings" is characterized as the "early propagation" (*snga dar*) of Buddhism in traditional histories. The "later propagation" (*phyi dar*) began when the translator Rinchen Sangpo (Rin chen bzang po, 985–1055) returned to Tibet after a period of study in India. Another important figure was the Indian scholar-monk Atiśa (982–1054), who accepted an invitation from the kings of western Tibet to revive the Dharma in the Land of Snows. He arrived in 1042 and remained for the rest of his life. Atiśa exerted a profound influence on the subsequent development of Buddhism in Tibet, and the model of the path he espoused – which combines an emphasis on strict adherence to the norms of monastic discipline, intensive study of all aspects of the tradition, and tantric meditative techniques – became normative for the majority of Tibetan monastics. At the same time, other tantric lineages came to Tibet, mainly from Bihār and Bengal, that denigrated the monastic paradigm and valorized tantric practices that included sexual yogas (and so were incompatible with monastic vows). These were often associated with iconoclastic figures who lived outside the Buddhist mainstream and who characterized monastics as plodding and conventional and claimed that their practices were more effective in providing a rapid path to buddhahood. These two streams of Buddhist thought and practice became part of all Tibetan Buddhist orders, each of which tends to emphasize one or the other.

Influence of the Mongols

During the twelfth century, Mongol armies marched across Asia and eastern Europe, conquering vast areas. As they approached Tibet, a group of leaders decided to surrender in order to prevent a bloody invasion. Sakya Pandita (Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, 1182–1251) was deputized to travel to the Mongol court and cede dominion of Tibet, but when he arrived the Mongol leader Godan Khan (1206–1251) was so impressed by him that he converted to Buddhism and asked Sakya Pandita to be his religious preceptor. This continued with his nephew and successor Pakpa (Phags pa bLo gros, 1235–1280), and the

*lama*s (Tib. *bla ma*) of the Sakya order became regents of Tibet under ultimate Mongol authority. The Mongols in turn were patrons of Buddhism.

When Mongol power waned in the thirteenth century, Tibet regained its independence, and in the seventeenth century most of the country was united under the rule of the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Losang Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617–1682), who came to power with the help of Mongol armies. From this time until the Chinese invasion in the 1950s, successive Dalai Lamas (believed by tradition to be emanations of Avalokiteśvara) ruled the country except for a few periods of civilian governance.

The Chinese Invasion

Beginning in 1949, Chinese armies began to penetrate the Tibetan Plateau, claiming that they were "liberating" the country from "foreign imperialists" (at the time there were only four foreigners in Tibet, and none had influence with the government). Many Tibetans were killed, but this paled next to the destruction of the Cultural Revolution, during which the Tibetan government-in-exile estimates that more than 1 million Tibetans perished, thousands of monasteries were destroyed, and Tibet's rich cultural heritage was devastated. In 1959, the fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso (bsTan 'dzin rgya mtsho, 1935–), fled into exile in India, where he was later joined by tens of thousands of other Tibetans. They established an exile government in the former British hill station of Dharamsala, and the major monasteries that had been destroyed in Tibet were subsequently rebuilt in India and Nepal.

Today Tibetan Buddhism is flourishing in exile, and it has also attracted large numbers of adherents in North America, Europe, and Australia. Charismatic lamas like Lama Yeshe, Sogyal Rinpoche, Chogyam Trungpa, and the Dalai Lama have established Buddhist centers all over the world and often attract thousands of people at their public lectures. At the same time, the Chinese government continues to actively persecute Buddhism in Tibet, and the situation there remains grim. An estimated 3,000 Tibetans flee into exile every year, braving some of the world's highest passes during the winter months, for an uncertain future in India or elsewhere. The majority are monks and nuns, who report widespread and often horrific persecution and torture. The Chinese government officially proclaims freedom of religion, but the reality is that this is merely propaganda.

IS BUDDHISM A RELIGION?

A common theme of Buddhist modernists – particularly those educated in Western schools – is the assertion that Buddhism is "not a religion," that it is "rational," "empirical," and "scientific." It is a "philosophy" and a "way of life" and, unlike religions, it does not rely on blind faith, but instead encourages independent investigation of its truth claims and empirical verification of its doctrines. These ideas have been eagerly accepted by many Western converts, who view Buddhism as a rational alternative to their native traditions, which value acceptance of doctrines on faith alone and link this to salvation.

The *Kālāma-sutta*, a discourse in the Pāli canon attributed to Śākyamuni Buddha, is often cited in support of this idea. In it, the Buddha is asked by the Kālāmas how they should evaluate the many claims and counter-claims of religious teachers, each of whom propounds a particular system of doctrine and practice and denigrates those of his rivals. All have evidence for their claims, all are regarded as supremely wise by their followers, many

use scriptures such as the Vedas as evidence for their teachings, but they disagree on how scriptures should be interpreted. In response, the Buddha advises:

> Do not be [convinced] by reports, tradition, or hearsay; nor by skill in the scriptural collections, argumentation, or reasoning; nor after examining conditions or considering theories; nor because [a theory] fits appearances, nor because of respect for an ascetic [who holds a particular view]. Rather, Kālamas, when you know for yourselves: 'These doctrines are nonvirtuous; these doctrines are erroneous; these doctrines are rejected by the wise; these doctrines, when performed and undertaken, lead to loss and suffering – then you should reject them, Kālamas.
>
> (*Aṅguttara-nikāya* I.189)

At first glance, the Buddha appears to be advising the Kālamas to employ a rigorously rational, pragmatic, and empirical standard in evaluating claims by religious teachers. They should determine whether the adoption of a particular practice leads to positive or negative results, whether a doctrine accords with observable facts, and should not be convinced merely by claims made by teachers or their followers regarding authority and veracity.

This shares some elements with contemporary understandings of the scientific method, which subjects theories to rigorous testing by empirical experiments to determine whether or not they are verifiable. Scientists should ideally critique the findings of their peers, and even well-established theories are later overturned by subsequent experimentation. But if we look more closely at the Buddha's advice, it is clear that the canons of rationality he espouses are not those of modern science, nor of contemporary Western philosophy.

When he tells the Kālamas that they can be confident if a doctrine or practice is accepted by the wise and practiced by the wise, he is making an appeal to traditional authority. Who are "the wise"? Non-Buddhists? Opponents of the Buddha? Obviously not. Rather, "the wise" are those who agree with the Buddha and his teachings. The Buddha's admonitions to examine teachings and teachers include a clear appeal to authority, and in a traditional society like ancient India such a caveat would be viewed as a sign of rationality. Each society has its own canons of reason, and in a traditional society it is to be expected that reasoning would include input from recognized authorities. This is a cornerstone of traditional notions of rationality, and it would be viewed as foolish in the extreme for an ordinary person to arrogantly imagine that he or she has the capacity to understand the truth without guidance by "the wise." Such an approach would be irrational in this environment, but the fact that in the contemporary West educated elites generally consider such appeals to be antithetical to rational inquiry is simply a reflection of current standards. The fact that we have different canons of rationality than those prevalent in the Buddha's time reflects one culture's approach to reasoning but, as Alasdair MacIntyre has pointed out, there is no universal, nonpositional standard of rationality. Rather, each culture creates its own standards and uses them to make judgments.

It should be clear that the approach the Buddha advocates has little in common with the scientific method, and while there are certainly skeptical philosophers and traditions in Buddhism – dating back to the Buddha himself and including such thinkers as Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, and Dharmakīrti – there are also faith-oriented traditions that have attracted far more followers than these elite thinkers. Throughout Buddhist history, most Buddhists have engaged in merit-making activities – even though no direct correlation between their performance and later results can be unambiguously observed – because they

believe such actions to be efficacious. They hold this belief because religious authorities have told them that meritorious actions result in positive karma. Most Buddhists do not examine the truth of the Buddha's words (or those of other Buddhist authorities) for themselves with empirical analysis and pragmatic testing, but rather accept them on the basis of faith.

Some Buddhist doctrines are clearly falsified by contemporary scientific knowledge. The Buddha taught, for example, that the earth is a flat disk with a huge mountain (Mt. Meru) at its center, with four continents at its base oriented toward the cardinal directions and subcontinents oriented toward the ordinal directions. Anyone who takes a plane flight can empirically falsify the Buddha's teachings on this topic, and there are a number of other statements of the Buddha that can be similarly rejected on the basis of evidence from scientific tests that were not available during his lifetime.

Some core doctrines, such as no-self, dependent arising, and the four truths, are characterized by Tibetan Buddhists as "slightly hidden phenomena" because although ordinary beings fail to see that things lack a permanent self, that they arise and perish due to causes and conditions, and that situations are prone to lead to suffering, observation of the world through the senses, coupled with analysis, can verify that the Buddha was correct in making these assertions. But other aspects of Buddhist philosophy – such as karma theory and the doctrine of rebirth – cannot be proven by any intersubjectively verifiable experience or by reasoning.

Buddhism claims that advanced meditators develop extraordinary perceptual abilities that enable them to see the operations of karma and rebirth directly, but the vast majority of Buddhists must accept them on faith alone because the Buddha and other teachers propounded them. This is not compatible with a "scientific" approach, because when Buddhists engage in meditation training the goal is to train their minds and perceptions to accord with the Buddha's teachings in a process of self-brainwashing through repetition. There is no room for independent examination of the Buddha's teachings or rejection of them if one's experience proves to be discordant; rather, if one comes to divergent conclusions, one's teacher will reject them and advise greater effort in convincing oneself of the truth of the Buddha's words.

NOTES

1   Most Indic technical terms will be given both in Sanskrit, the *lingua franca* of religious thinkers and philosophers in ancient India, and Pāli, the language of the canon of the Theravāda school. This is the only complete collection of a Buddhist canon that survives in an Indic language. The Sanskrit will appear first, and the Pāli second. In some cases the spelling is the same in both languages.

2   As we have seen, the term "dharma" also refers to Buddhist teaching and practice.

3   As we have seen, referring to them as "sūtras" implies that they are discourses spoken by the historical Buddha.

4   In the *Blaze of Reasoning* (*Tarkajvālā*), Bhavya (ca. 500–560) lists the main objections of the opponents of Mahāyāna: (1) the sūtras of the Mahāyāna corpus are not the word of the Buddha; (2) Mahāyāna contradicts the doctrine of impermanence by claiming that the Buddha never dies; (3) Mahāyāna teaches that the Buddha did not enter nirvana, which implies that nirvana is not the final state of peace; (4) Mahāyāna denigrates arhats, who are given the highest praise by the Buddha; (5) it exalts bodhisattvas above the Buddha; and (6) it perverts all of Buddhist teaching by claiming that the Buddha was merely an emanation.

5   An additional group of four is sometimes added, and this list is correlated with the ten levels (*bhūmi*) of the bodhisattva's development, which culminate at buddhahood: (7) skill in means; (8) aspiration; (9) power; and (10) knowledge.

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INDIAN BUDDHIST NARRATIVES ABOUT THE BUDDHA, HIS COMMUNITY, AND HIS TEACHINGS

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Karen C. Lang

INTRODUCTION

Narratives about Gautama Buddha's past lives, his quest for awakening, his teaching, and his death occur in the Discourse (*sūtra*; Pāli *sutta*) and Code of Conduct (*vinaya*) sections of the Buddhist canon and in sacred biographies such as Aśvaghoṣa's *Acts of the Buddha* (*Buddhacarita*), composed around the first–second centuries CE. Stories of the Buddha's past lives (*jātaka*), some corresponding to stories preserved in the Pāli canon, are included within the *Great Story* (*Mahāvastu*) and in the fourth–fifth-century *Garland of Birth Stories* (*Jātakamāla*) of Āryaśūrya and Haribhaṭṭa. Archaeological evidence indicates that some of these tales were well known in the third–second centuries BCE and carved in bas-relief on the monuments at the Buddhist sites of Sāñchī, Amarāvatī, and Bhārhut. Artisans also painted and inscribed scenes and verses from Āryaśura's stories in the Buddhist caves at Ajaṇṭā (Khoroche 1980: xi–xix).

The Pāli canon's *Collection of Minor Texts* includes the *Birth Stories* (*Jātaka*) and the *Narratives* (*Apadāna*). The *Narratives'* accounts of Buddha's disciples, the elder monks and elder nuns, indicate that all in previous lives had honored a buddha, who predicted that as a result of their merit they would become awakened under Gautama Buddha. In Sanskrit anthologies, the *Divine Stories* (*Divyāvadāna*) and the *Hundred Stories* (*Avadānaśataka*), the narratives of prominent monks, nuns, and laypeople, depict their spiritual progress through cultivation of moral virtues over many lifetimes. They illustrate the workings of karma and emphasize the importance of generosity, morality, and devotion.

The narrator – either explicit or implied – is the Buddha, and the stories derive their instructive power from his life story. During the long night he spent under the fig tree at Bodhgayā, he remembered all his past lives and understood how his actions had impacted the course of his subsequent rebirths. He acquired the ability also to perceive how the past actions of others had particular consequences in their present lives that would continue to influence the direction of their future births as well. The *Divine Stories* more often concerns the past lives of the Buddha's disciples; these stories' attempts to explain the intricate nexus of karma and rebirth are often more overt than in the *Birth Stories*.

The Buddha is also the implied narrator of Mahāyāna discourses (*sūtra*) that describe a new path toward becoming a buddha. The Buddha's biography is reinterpreted and new

elements added. The *Skill in Means Discourse* (*Upāyakauśalyasūtra*), for example, states that the bodhisattva (the term by which the Buddha is referred prior to his attainment of buddhahood) did not actually enter his mother's womb and was in a state of profound meditation during her pregnancy. The Buddha further declares that he became awakened countless eons ago and has ceaselessly worked for the benefit of sentient beings. In his life as Śākyamuni, he only appeared to be born, leave home, and practice austerities (Powers 2009: 168–169). The narratives of the Buddha's life and those of his disciples are reshaped in accordance with the Mahāyāna ideals of great compassion and the perfection of wisdom. Buddhahood and the bodhisattvas who pursue it are no longer seen as rare. Becoming a buddha is the goal of all Mahāyāna practitioners who vow to become bodhisattvas for the benefit of all sentient beings.

As Mahāyāna Buddhism continued to develop, *tantras*, a new genre of Buddhist literature, were added to the vast collection of Mahāyāna texts. These *tantras*, like some early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, claimed to be revelations acquired from buddhas through meditation, visions, and dreams. Some of these scriptures may date back as early as the fifth century CE, but most were composed between the eighth and eleventh centuries, when the tantric path was followed in both lay and monastic circles. The authors of these texts claimed that Tantra, with its practice of esoteric rituals and visualization techniques, is a faster and more effective path to buddhahood than the bodhisattva's path. Narratives about religious specialists, the tantric adepts (*siddha*), celebrate the cultivation of supernatural powers that speed up their progress and make the goal attainable in one lifetime.

This article will explore some Indian Buddhist narratives that monastics and lay people have used to describe the workings of karma and rebirth and the pursuit of awakening. Throughout the development of Buddhism, narratives about the Buddha and his disciples have played a major role in shaping how Buddhists understood the path to buddhahood and the importance of developing generosity, compassion, and wisdom along the way.

THE BUDDHA'S PAST LIVES

Charles Hallisey and Anne Hansen draw attention to the scholarly bias against narrative literature and argue that a restrictive view of story literature as "unimportant folk tales that have little to do with the profoundly philosophical corpus" fails to take into account the ethical significance of the genre or the content of the stories themselves (Hallisey and Hansen 1996: 309–10). The *Birth Stories* in which animals are the main characters tell us nothing at all about animal behavior. Stories that seem to be about dogs are in fact stories about situations that face human beings. Hallisey suggests that using animals as "ethical exemplars" provides a skillful way of discussing moral virtues without specific references to caste and gender (Hallisey and Hansen 1996: 312–13).

In the *Dog Birth Story* (*Kukkura Jātaka*; Cowell 1957: 59–61), the bodhisattva's past actions resulted in his rebirth as the leader of a large pack of graveyard dogs. The bodhisattva, reborn as a dog, prevented an angry king from slaughtering all the city's dogs. The king ordered the death of all dogs after some had devoured the leather of his chariot. Motivated by his cultivation of love, the bodhisattva resolved to save their lives. He proved the king's own dogs guilty by feeding them buttermilk and grass that caused them to vomit up the leather. The future Buddha then taught the king about Buddhism, and from that time on the king protected the lives of all creatures within his kingdom. In this story a despised dog that exemplifies the virtues of compassion and nonviolence is seen as morally superior to the king.

The *Vessantara Birth* story (Cowell 1957: 247–303), the longest of the 547 Pāli *Birth Stories* and last in the collection, is traditionally regarded as the Buddha's last life before his birth as Prince Siddhārtha. Prince Vessantara gave away everything asked of him. His father the king exiled him to the forest after he gave away the kingdom's magical white elephant. He then proceeded to give away his two children to an evil brahman and his wife to Indra, the king of the gods. But after praising Vessantara's generous offer, Indra gave her back; and Vessantara's father redeemed his grandchildren from slavery. Reunited with his family and forgiven for his extraordinary generosity, Vessantara returned from exile to become king. This story, which appears first carved on the second-century BCE *stūpa* at Bhārhut, is painted on murals in ancient caves in Ajaṇṭā and Dunhuang and in temples throughout East and Southeast Asia. The recitation of the *Vessantara Birth Story* often accompanies religious ceremonies marking the New Year, as well as commemoration of the Buddha's birth, awakening, and death.

Women as well as men are able to become awakened, but the exclusion of women from the bodhisattva path denies them the possibility of becoming a buddha. The tradition that explicitly excludes women from the bodhisattva path, Naomi Appleton points out, belongs to the later commentarial layer, which presented the stories as part of the bodhisattva's path to buddhahood. The few stories of changing sex in the Theravāda tradition (the dominant Buddhist tradition in Southeast Asia) do not challenge the position that sex is soteriologically irrelevant. However, Appleton observes they do portray sex as morally relevant. For example, in the *Mahānaradakassapa Birth Story*, a princess tries to convince her father of the importance of moral actions by telling him about her own previous births. As a result of one birth in which she was a man who seduced other men's wives, she suffered in hell. After that, she was born as a monkey whose testicles were bitten off by the leader of the herd, then as a castrated ox, and finally as a human who was neither man nor woman. As the result of past good karma, she was eventually reborn as a heavenly nymph, followed by her present birth as a princess. She explains that she can't become a man until her bad karma from seducing other men's wives is exhausted. These rare stories of changing sex develop the idea that birth as a woman is the result of bad karma and that women should aspire to be reborn as men. Societal constraints and women's suffering support the idea that female birth, women's pain in childbirth, and domination by their husbands and in-laws are all regarded as karmic retribution for immoral acts. Appleton concludes that the exclusion of women from the bodhisattva path reinforced the idea that changing into a man overcomes both social and spiritual limitations (Appleton 2011: 26–50).

A male body also is required before one can become a buddha according to the *Divine Stories* and Haribhaṭṭa's *Garland of Birth Stories*. A woman named Rūpavatī cuts off her breasts in order to feed a starving woman who is about to devour her own newly born child. Her dilemma: if I take her son and go, she will die. How can I save both? She offers her breasts to the woman as food. When she returns home, Indra appears disguised as a brahman and begs for food. Drawing on the power of her generous gift, he performs an act of truth that transforms her into a man. She is subsequently reborn as a man who sacrifices himself to save a hungry tigress (Ohnuma 2000).

The story of the hungry tigress is first of the thirty-four stories in Āryaśūrya's *Garland of Birth Stories*. Prince Mahāsattva is riding through a forest with his brothers when he finds a starving tigress so weak with hunger that she cannot feed her cubs. Out of compassion, he strips off his clothes, lies down before her, slits his throat with a sharp bamboo stick, and offers the tigress his body and blood. She obligingly consumes everything but his bones.

In this birth story and in another included in the *Skill in Means Discourse*, the act of taking life, usually regarded negatively, is depicted in a positive light because the motivation for the characters' actions is compassion. In another story, the bodhisattva is a ship captain who takes a man's life in order to prevent him from killing other passengers and stealing their possessions (Tatz 1994: 73–74). The bodhisattva knows that the man came on board ship with the intention of killing 500 merchants and stealing their property. Motivated by compassion, the captain decides to take the man's life. Any act of intentional killing generates negative karma, but committing 500 intentional acts of killing and, in particular, killing virtuous people – all the merchants are bodhisattvas – is far worse. The captain skillfully benefits the potential mass murderer by saving him from eons in the hell realms and also prevents the merchants from being murdered.

But the pursuit of these character traits and the bodhisattva's cultivation of the virtues of generosity and compassion don't neatly correspond to any Western ethical model – whether some form of virtue ethics or utilitarianism. The goal of the bodhisattva's path is not a happy life for oneself but to benefit others – and not just in one life but in a series of existences that extend over vast periods of time.

THE BUDDHA'S PATH

The bodhisattva's path culminates in buddhahood. The *Great Story's* biography of the Buddha relates that a brahman sage, Asita, through his efforts in meditation, acquired the supernatural ability of clairvoyance that enabled him to see the source of the power that shook the earth under his forest hermitage: the newly born Prince Siddhārtha. He arrived by his supernatural flying ability at the palace in Kapilavastu, where he predicted to King Śuddhodana that his son would become a buddha. The king, determined that Asita's prediction would not hold, offered his son young and talented female musicians and told him: "amuse yourself with them; don't become an ascetic." The text's anonymous authors seem to relish describing these young women with their fair skin, long, luxuriant black hair, eyes that sparkle like gems, and sheer red garments that show off their ample breasts and hips (II.146–47). The sight of these beautiful musicians, hired for the young prince's amusement, instead turned his thoughts away from sensual pleasure and provided the impetus for his decision to leave home. Their unsuccessful attempts to entertain him put him to sleep. When he awakened, he saw the bodies of some of these sleeping women wet with the saliva that dripped from their open mouths. Their bodies reminded him of a charnel ground covered with corpses awaiting cremation. The prince's quest for a solution to the troubling problem of death brought him to the Vindhya Mountains, where he engaged in years of fruitless ascetic practice.

But the Vindyha Mountain forest groves are not only refuges for ascetics; they are refuges for loving couples as well. A series of verses (*Mahavastu* II.203.19–30) describes the natural beauty of these mountain groves in vivid detail. The hermitages of the ascetic community are set in dense jungle forests near mountain streams. Trees and vines are thick with fruit and blossoms, pools are covered in lotuses, and streams run clea. But every flowering vine or tree reminds the anonymous monks who composed these verses of young women.

> Here many red flowering vines embrace young trees,
> Like young women, fallen asleep, worn out from making love.

> Here buds of red acanthus flowers burst open into blossoms,
> Like young women awakened, their eyes released from sleep.
> Here bright-colored branches of many flowering forest trees,
> Stirred by a gentle breeze, caress one another like playful young women.
> Here in a row in the forest flowering flame trees are like
> Attractive young women in a teacher's house dressed in red with lovely eyes.

Red vines wrapped around tree trunks evoke the image of slumbering young women with their arms wrapped around their lovers. Buds bursting into bloom bring to mind the beautiful eyes of young women awakening from sleep. The rows of flame trees inflame the minds of monks enchanted by the beautiful eyes of a teacher's nubile daughters. Whether these verses reflect the reminiscences of old monks or the fantasies of young ones, they reveal more than a passing interest in sexual pleasures. But the young prince remained unmoved by suggestive splendors of spring flowers and trees in bloom. After six years passed, he finally realized that the austere diet and rigorous asceticism that he had practiced had only shriveled his body and dulled his mind.

Aśvaghoṣa's *Acts of the Buddha* even more vividly contrasts the pleasures that women offer and pains that forest ascetics endure. Aśvaghoṣa's elegant verses describe at length Prince Siddhārtha's rejection of the young women his father sends to him. The sight of the handsome prince inflames their minds with passion. But they are overcome with his beauty and are only stirred into action by the king's priest. He reminds them how even renowned ascetics like Viśvamitra succumbed to female seduction– it should be much easier with a young prince (*Buddhacarita* IV.21). He urges them to put forth their best efforts. Motivated by their passion and the brahman's encouragement, some press their ample breasts against the prince's body; others entwine their arms around him. One whispers suggestive remarks in his ear; another sings a provocative song. Gold earrings set off the beauty of the women's faces, and golden belts call attention to their swaying hips. Through all this, the prince's senses remain controlled; he is moved only by the thought of the inevitability of death. Siddhārtha represents a new type of ascetic – a young itinerant wanderer who rejects his wife, and the pleasures of sex on the side, for a celibate life lived in pursuit of the deathless state (nirvana).

The brahman ascetics described in chapter seven of *Acts of the Buddha* subsisted on what they found in the water or on the ground. Some of them imitated deer and birds and ate only raw food – fruits, nuts, and roots – that they picked up off the ground or dug up. All the ascetics Siddhārtha met believed that the pleasures of heaven are attained by enduring painful austerities. The skeptical prince, however, saw the irony of their harsh practices: although they said their actions were done in the anticipation of pleasure, their exertions brought them nothing but pain. The prince doubted that these brahman hermits' mortification of their bodies or subsisting on austere diets would result in any merit. If merit comes from eating food found in the forest, then even wild animals that eat leaves and grass should acquire it (VII.26). The harsh life of the forest ascetics had no appeal for the bodhisattva.

Prince Siddhārtha left behind his home and family in search of an answer to the question of why people suffer. Neither his experience of sensual pleasures as a rich man's son nor his engagement in harsh austerities as an ascetic brought relief. After he found the answer to his question, he chose the active life of teaching over a quiet one of meditative silence. When asked to teach, he responded with compassionate concern for the wellbeing of others. He sought out five former ascetic companions and told them about a middle path that avoided both self-indulgence and self-torture. In this first discourse the Buddha identified the

demands of desire as the basic cause of human suffering. He prescribed a course of treatment to alleviate pain and restore sufferers to health. He recommended treatment that is not just concerned with alleviating physical pain. It is equally important to treat the mental pain that comes from wanting what is unattainable (immortality) or transient (happiness, beauty, power). The Buddha took his message on the road and acquired disciples in the cities and rural areas through which he traveled. The new community (*saṅgha*) he formed was not linked by blood ties but by a vision of this world as a disturbing and dangerous place.

BUDDHA'S COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLES

Buddhist narratives connect the Buddha and his disciples in a sequence of past lives. In the *Divine Stories*, Dharmaruci was once Mati, a young student of the Vedas, who witnessed Dīpaṁkara Buddha predict that his friend would become Śākyamuni Buddha. Angered when Dīpaṁkara Buddha placed his feet on the matted dreadlocks of the prostrate bodhisattva, he exclaimed: "He puts his feet on Sumati's hair just like an animal!" The blind surge of anger that Dharmaruci displayed resulted in his repeated rebirth as an ignorant and impulsive animal. All of Dharmaruci's past lives were marked by this metamorphosis. He crossed the boundary from human to animal as a negative consequence of his anger. Then he re-crossed back into human form owing to the liberating power of the Buddha's name. In one life as a whale, his fortunate remembrance of the Buddha counteracted his initial hostile intention of sinking a boat and devouring its passengers. Finally, the monk Dharmaruci transformed himself from an ordinary person into an enlightened sage through his comprehension of the Buddha's teachings.

According to the *Divine Stories*, after Śākyamuni Buddha became awakened and first began teaching, Dharmaruci was a gigantic whale named Timitimigila. When the merchant Thapakarṇi and his 500 companions sailed into this ravenous sea monster's realm, Timitimigila opened his huge jaws and said to the merchants: "These ships will sink beneath the sea. Do what you must, your life is over!" The frightened men then called upon their gods in vain, until the arhat Pūrṇaka flew to their aid. Floating in the air above them, he instructed them to call out the Buddha's name. Timitimigila now remembered that he had first heard the name of a buddha eons ago. He gave up eating unlucky seafarers and died of starvation. Born into a brahman family, he later entered the Buddha's order and became liberated through Śākyamuni Buddha's teachings. As Dharmaruci bowed at his feet, the Buddha said: "It's been a long time, Dharmaruci." The *Divine Stories* adds a few more details to the story of Dharmaruci's becoming an arhat. The Buddha asked Dharmaruci if he had ever seen the ocean. When he said no, the Buddha told him, "Hang on to the edge of my robe" and flew him to the ocean's shore, to the precise location where Timitimigila's bones remained. The Buddha instructed him to concentrate his mind, but Dharmaruci was confused and unable to determine what the meditative object was. When the Buddha described it as bone from a body that was once his, Dharmaruci grew disenchanted with the world, focused his mind again, and became an arhat. The narrative concludes in the same way with Dharmaruci bowing his head at the feet of the Buddha who said: "It's been a long time" (*Divine Stories* 239–41).

The *Divine Stories* tells a compelling tale about the consequences of negative karma and the positive transformation that comes from following the Buddhist path. Faith in the power of the Buddha's name initiated the process of physical transformation, but it was completed only after Dharmaruci's concentration transformed his mind. The Buddha uses Dharmaruci's

story to make a similar point: kind and patient friends can serve as antidotes to the harmful consequences of hatred. The bodhisattva Sumati persuaded his angry friend to follow Dīpaṃkara Buddha; and eons later, the two were reunited on the path as teacher and student. Reborn as Śākyamuni Buddha, he exercised kindness and compassion toward the young monk Dharmaruci, and patiently led him from confusion to understanding.

Among Śākyamuni's first disciples were members of his extended family, including his cousin Ānanda. According to tradition, he was reluctant to found an order of nuns. When Mahāpajāpatī Gotamī could not convince him, Ānanda interceded on her behalf. Initially unsuccessful, he asked the Buddha if a woman is capable of attaining awakening, if she leaves the household life and follows his teaching and discipline. When the Buddha affirmed this, Ānanda made the request more personal: he reminded him that Mahāpajāpatī raised him and fed him with her own milk after his mother died. He further pointed out that previous buddhas had ordained nuns, and Śākyamuni acknowledged this precedent. In response, the Buddha consented to Mahāpajāpatī's request for the formation of an order of nuns, but only on condition that the women accept eight special disciplinary rules, which effectively ensured the continuance of male control. These precepts require that nuns not live where monks cannot supervise them, that monks take part in the ordination of nuns, determine the dates for their twice-monthly confessional meetings, participate in the interrogation of nuns who break any of the rules, help decide the appropriate penalties, and that any nun, regardless of her seniority within the community, must treat even the most junior monk with the respect due a senior member. But these rules did not impede nuns' religious practice; nuns were seen as having an equal capacity for realizing the truth of the Buddha's teachings, as is attested in numerous accounts of advanced female practitioners.

The *Nuns' Verses* (*Therīgāthā*), the *Nuns' Narratives* (*Therī-apadāna*), and Dhammapāla's sixth-century commentary on their verses record various motivations for women who follow Mahāpajāpatī's action by becoming nuns. Some celebrate their liberation from the hard work of a householder's life. Muttā, the daughter of a poor brahman, was given away in marriage to a hunchbacked man who agreed to free her from marriage. She says (Thīg 11):

> I'm free. I'm free from three
> crooked things: the mortar,
> the pestle, and my hunchbacked husband.
> All that drags me back is cut!

This verse has a counterpart in the *Monks' Verses* (*Theragāthā*): Sumaṅgala likewise celebrates his freedom from hard work in the fields and welcomes the opportunity for a life dedicated to meditation (*Theragāthā* 43):

> I'm free from three crooked things:
> Sickles, ploughs, curved spades.
> Enough of them! Meditate
> Sumaṅgala, meditate Sumaṅgala,
> Remain vigilant, Sumaṅgala.

The adoption of a monastic lifestyle was not always respected. Rohinī gave a long and spirited defense of the Buddhist ascetics she supported (*Therīgāthā* 271–90). Her father said:

You give a lot of food and drink to ascetics, Rohiṇī.
Now I ask you: Why do you like ascetics so much?
They don't like to work, they're lazy, they live off what others give, full of
Expectation, lusting after sweet things, why do you like ascetics so much?

His patient daughter responded:

You've been asking me about ascetics, for a long time father;
I praise them for their wisdom, their ethical behavior, and their efforts.
They have gone forth, are from various families and from various countries
And yet they are friendly to one another – that's why I like ascetics so much.

She insisted that the Buddha's disciples do like to work, they're not lazy, they're free from desire and hatred, pure in body, speech, and mind, learned, and skilled in teaching. They live simple lives and don't accumulate property, gold, or silver. Her final justification for her high regard is that these ascetics are friends with one another although they come from different families and from different countries. She advised her father that if he fears suffering he should take refuge with the Buddha. Convinced by his daughter, the brahman takes the three refuges and becomes an *arhat:* "Now I am truly a brahman. I have the threefold knowledge – I am washed clean." The threefold knowledge is not the traditional mastery of the three Vedas, but in this context indicates that he has acquired knowledge of his previous existences, knowledge of how others are reborn as a result of their actions, and knowledge of the destruction of the corruptions (*āsāva*), namely, desire for sensual pleasure, desire for continued existence, and ignorance.

Few of the nuns mention escape from the bonds of marriage as their motivation for entering the Buddhist community. Many more of these women speak instead of their grief over the involuntary separation from their cherished family members as their motivation for becoming nuns. The sympathetic advice they receive from the Buddha and his followers alleviates the pain of losing children, parents, and husbands, and brings them into the religious community.

Reiko Ohnuma argues that the death of a child has a greater impact upon women and leads not only to more profound and prolonged grieving but also to a greater confrontation with compelling, existential questions, which can result in greater religious involvement. Buddhist texts condemn a mother's love as a potent manifestation of desire, attachment, and clinging – all negative emotions in Buddhism that perpetuate bondage within the realm of cyclic existence. The Buddha's love is characterized by detachment and equanimity – qualities that lead to nirvana. Kisa Gotamī's attachment to her son "stands as a potent symbol of intense suffering – a heightened version of the suffering that entraps all deluded beings within *saṃsāra*." She is freed from bondage after the "particularistic grief over one specific dead baby" has been "properly universalized into a general understanding of the inevitability of death, impermanence, and suffering" (Ohnuma 2007: 96–105). Dhammapāla tells her story in detail. She was neglected and despised by her husband's family until she gave birth to a son. Distraught after his death, she carried his small corpse around with her hoping to find someone who had medicine to cure him. One man advised her to ask the Buddha for medicine. The Buddha directed her to go into town and bring back a mustard seed from a family in which no one had died. Every house she reached had seen death, and she came to understand that all things are impermanent. She returned to the Buddha, asked

to become a nun, and after deepening her insight into impermanence she attained *nibbāna* (Skt. nirvāṇa; *Therīgāthā* 222–23).

> I've cultivated the noble eightfold path that leads to never dying.
> I've realized *nibbāna*. I've seen the teachings as a mirror. The dart
> has been extracted from me and my burden laid down. I've done what
> needed to be done. I, the elder Kisā Gotamī, with my mind completely liberated, have
> said this.

In a similar story, the Buddha restored to sanity Paṭacārā, whose grief over her dead children had intensified into madness. Dhammapāla describes in detail Paṭacārā's painful story (summarized in Rhys-Davids 1909: 87–89). She lost her entire family – her husband and their two young children, her parents, and her brother – within a few days. A poisonous snake's bite killed her husband. As she traveled back to her family and crossed a river with her two small children, a hawk seized the youngest, and the other drowned in the raging river. When she arrived in her family's village, she saw the corpses of her parents and brother burning on a single funeral pyre. The rainstorm that had swelled the river had also caused their house to collapse on them. Driven mad by her grief, she wandered the streets half-naked as uncaring people threw garbage and dirt at her in contempt. The Buddha reminded Paṭacārā that just as she now cried over the loss of her two young sons, she had in the past cried over the deaths of many children; the volume of tears that she had shed was greater than all the water the oceans contain. She requested ordination and worked hard to progress on the path to liberation. Later, as she poured water to wash her feet and watched it trickle away, her mind became steadfast. That night she watched the oil lamp's flickering flame, then took a needle and extinguished it (*Therīgāthā* 115–16):

> I washed my feet and watched the water trickle down. I focused
> my mind as if I were training a thoroughbred horse.
> I took an oil lamp and entered my cell.
> I prepared my bed and sat on down it.
> Then I took a needle and pulled out the wick.
> The complete liberation of my mind was like
> extinguishing that lamp.

This poignant story of great loss and recovery retains its power to inspire contemporary Buddhists. Anne Hansen notes that Paṭacārā's story

> emerged as particularly important to many of the Khmer refugees: Not only does she experience terrible loss, but she is the only survivor among all of her family members – a situation all too common among the refugees. Certain events were particularly emphasized by the Khmer storytellers: the loss of her children, her madness, the way in which other people treat her, and particularly her nakedness – events that mark human vulnerability too familiar to Khmer refugees. In the midst of this misery and loss, the Buddha's reaction to Paṭacārā, even her nakedness, is notably different from that of other people, and his compassion for her is transformative. Her narrative, in all its versions, also provides some indication that tragic events are not completely without relief.
>
> (Hallisey and Hansen 1996: 321)

She also exemplifies the virtue of compassion. In another popular story, Candā, a poor and hungry widow with no family, wanders for seven years until "I met a nun who had food and drink. I approached her and said: 'Bring me into the homeless life.' Patācārā out of her compassion brought me in, encouraged me, and urged me to the highest goal" (*Therīgāthā* 124–25). Patācārā's compassion went beyond providing food and clothing for a poor woman. She gave Candā the greatest gift: the teachings of the Buddha that led her from ignorance to wisdom.

Bonds between family members, often the source of deep pain, are replaced by loyalty to the religious community. Entrance into the Order provided for women an alternative to an identity based upon marriage and the bearing of children. Because society defined women's roles as procreative, their choice of a celibate life was a radical repudiation of mainstream societal values. The religious life also provided them with an opportunity for an education, often denied them in lay life, and with the opportunity to teach others. Nuns were active as teachers in the early Indian Buddhist community; most often as teachers to nuns. At Sāñchī six inscriptions record the donations of nuns who were the students of five different teachers. Several nuns were renowned for their teaching; one was noted for her knowledge of the Buddha's discourses (Barnes 2000: 23). But by the fourth–fifth century CE the nuns' community was in decline. Gregory Schopen observes that the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* represents monks and nuns in economic competition; he cites a story set during a great festival when monks took an image in procession and received copious donations from laypeople; nuns asked for a share and were refused (Schopen 2008: 632). This and other stories from the time suggest that the nuns' order had become subordinate to that of monks and that they were viewed as having a lower status.

THE MAHĀYĀNA PATH

Although the origins of the Mahāyāna movement remain obscure, most scholars agree that it developed in monastic circles. The new discourses (*sūtra*) they created, although often expanded in length, were modeled on older paradigms. The creators of these new Mahāyāna *sūtras* disputed the mainstream canons' claims to represent a complete collection of the Buddha's teachings. These *sūtras* were presented in the form of dialogs between Śākyamuni Buddha and his disciples that took place in various regions in central India, often on Vulture Peak. The anonymous creators of these Mahāyāna *sūtras* and the preachers who memorized and recited them in public regarded these works as the Buddha's word on the grounds that "Whatever is well spoken is the word of the Buddha." This sentiment, attributed to the Buddha in the Pāli canon, implied that if a teaching accords with others authoritatively linked to the religion's founder, accords with his teachings and soteriological goals, then it may be accepted as genuine. These anonymous authors and dharma preachers believed that the Buddha revealed some of these *sūtras* in meditations, visions, and dreams. Other *sūtras*, including the *Perfection of Wisdom* scriptures, claimed to be teachings entrusted by the Buddha to semi-divine beings, the serpent-like *nāgas*, until the time came when there were people receptive to their profound, deep teachings. The *sūtras* proclaimed their own unique authoritative status and the vast quantities of merit that the devout could acquire from hearing, preaching, and copying these texts.

Among the earliest of these texts that is extant today was the *Eight Thousand Lines on the Perfection of Wisdom* (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*). The earliest known manuscript copy, radio-carbon dated to the second century CE, was recently discovered among a cache

of Buddhist Sanskrit manuscripts, which may have come from a monastic library in Bamiyan, Afghanistan. David Drewes suggests that Indian Mahāyāna was primarily a textual movement that developed in Buddhist preaching circles and centered on the production and use of Mahāyāna *sūtras* (2009: 4):

> Who these preachers were is not fully clear, but a fair guess would be that the first of them may have begun as preachers of more traditional texts. Mahāyāna preachers gave their imaginations free rein to expand the old Buddhist world and locate it within an infinitely more vast and glorious Buddhist universe with new religious possibilities for all. They attributed great power to their texts and preached that they could enable people not only to quickly attain arhatship, but Buddhahood as well. In time, the new movement came to identify itself exclusively with the pursuit of Buddhahood and denigrate the pursuit of lower religious goals.

We sometimes find male lay bodhisattvas as subjects of Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Lay bodhisattvas were expected to relinquish all attachment to their wives and children. Mahāyāna *sūtras* differ with regard to the status of female lay bodhisattvas. Some mandate a change of sex from female to male, symbolizing a transformation from carnal to spiritual, before they can enter into a buddha field. Others that depict bodhisattvas and buddhas as asexual beings regard the motif of sexual transformation as incompatible with the Buddhist teaching that the dualistic thinking exemplified in discrimination of maleness and femaleness is a mistaken view that must be transcended.

In stories of confrontations between monks and female characters, the *arhat* Śāriputra, known for his wisdom, is the usual interlocutor. In the story of the *nāga* king's daughter in the *Lotus of the True Teaching* (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*), Mañjuśrī describes the remarkable wisdom of the eight-year-old *nāga* princess (Paul 1985: 185–90). Śāriputra doesn't believe that she has been able to attain so much so quickly "because a woman's body is impure and not a suitable vessel for the dharma and because the path takes 'immeasurable eons to traverse: 'How then could a woman like you be able to attain buddhahood so quickly?'" The *nāga* girl's response to Śāriputra is to demonstrate how quickly she can attain awakening by comparing it to the speed with which she hands the Buddha a precious jewel. "Watch me attain buddhahood. It will be even quicker than that!" She then changes into a man "in the space of an instant," carries out all the practices of a bodhisattva, attains awakening, and expounds the Dharma to all beings everywhere in the ten directions. It's been suggested that the *nāga* princesses' jewel was associated with her female sex. She offered it to the Buddha as a sign of her commitment to becoming a buddha and then was magically transformed into a male buddha. This Mahāyāna narrative, like many others, emphasizes the superiority of a Mahāyāna bodhisattva's wisdom over that of the *arhat*.

Śāriputra appears again as the fall guy in a comic episode In the *Teaching of Vimalakīrti Discourse* (*Vimalakīrtinirdeśa-sūtra*) (Paul 1985: 221–232). After listening to the lay bodhisattva Vimalakīrti, a goddess expresses her joy by showering flowers over the audience. She rebukes Śāriputra, who is upset by the flowers that land on his robe (the rules on monastic conduct prohibit monks from wearing flower garlands) for the fear of sensual desire that he displays. He then challenges her: If you're so smart, why don't you change your female body? Through her supernatural powers, she changes him instead, into an exact replica of herself, and throws the question right back at him: Why don't you change your

female body? She then instructs him about the empty nature of both male and female characteristics. This story conveys the message that gender is irrelevant to awakening.

Although women practitioners on the bodhisattva path in early Mahāyāna communities may have been rare, some Mahāyāna *sūtras*, such as the *Eight Thousand Lines on the Perfection of Wisdom*, use feminine imagery to describe bodhisattvas and the wisdom that they seek. In his eagerness to experience awakening, the bodhisattva is like a pregnant woman about to become a mother (Conze 1973: 34). Another metaphor compares the bodhisattva to a man in love (Conze 1973: 47). In his pursuit of wisdom, he is like a man who constantly thinks of his beloved, especially when he is separated from her. Like a man who has made an assignation with a beautiful woman and whose mind is obsessed with the pleasure they will experience together, the bodhisattva's mind is fixed on the perfection of wisdom and the pleasure of obtaining her. These texts also depict her not as a savior, on whom these bodhisattvas rely, but as their mother. She is distinguished principally through her role of producing awakened sons (Conze 1973: 161). This perfection of wisdom has given birth to all buddhas and taught them what they needed to know about the world.

Chinese pilgrims to India reported witnessing the veneration of her image as early as the fifth century CE, but the earliest surviving figures date from several centuries later (Kinnard 1999: 134–47). Prajñāpāramitā reemerges in the texts of Buddhist Tantra as the prototype and essence of all the tantric female images. Personified as the "mother of all buddhas," she embodies the wisdom of realizing emptiness, the insight that transforms the unawakened into buddhas. Twelfth-century ritual texts describe the details of her iconography, not solely for the benefit of artisans crafting sculptures or illuminating manuscripts, but as an aid for guiding practitioners' visualization (Kinnard 1999: 136):

> I transform into the golden great mother, with one face and four arms.
> My first right hand holds a nine-pronged golden vajra. My first left hand holds the text of the *Perfection of Wisdom* (*Prajñāpāramitā*). My second right and left hands form the gesture of meditational equipoise. I am radiant and bear all the auspicious signs and marks of the buddhas.

In some tantric texts, Prajñāpāramitā, the great mother, is coupled with a male partner; this union represents the continual interplay and union of wisdom and great compassion. According to the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra*, a male practitioner should consider himself a buddha and regard his sexual partner as the embodiment of the perfection of wisdom; each should look at the other with sexual desire, but their minds must remain in one-pointed concentration (George 1974: 27–31, 67–77). In some tantric texts written by Indian Buddhists, Tārā replaces Prajñāpāramitā, both as the personification of the wisdom that realizes emptiness and as the mother of all buddhas (Landesman 2008: 45).

Wisdom alone is insufficient to produce buddhas; for wisdom must be balanced by compassion. Compassion is often represented in the form of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Associated with him is his female counterpart, Tārā. The conception of Tārā as the female companion of Avalokiteśvara spans the early phase of her cult in India from about the sixth through the eighth centuries CE (Landesman 2008: 53). The ruins of monasteries and cave temples in India attest to the popularity of images of both Avalokiteśvara and Tārā. She arose, some stories say, from his tears. He wept when he saw that no matter how many beings he saved, countless more remained in cyclic existence. A blue lotus grew in the water of his tears and Tārā emerged from it (Shaw 2006: 307). In the medieval illuminated

manuscripts of perfection of wisdom texts, we find images also of the bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokiteśvara, and his female counterpart, Tārā. The ruins of monasteries and cave temples in India also attest to the popularity of images of both Avalokiteśvara and Tārā. In assuming his primary function, the rescuing of all beings from the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, she becomes a feminine version of him rather than his sexual partner. The Indian poet Candragomin (ca. seventh century) praises her protective power:

> Entering upon the road linking and bending through the mountains,
> through ravines and valleys, I see you; and wandering the road
> I think of Tārā, greater than the strength of serpents

> (Beyer 1973: 229–30)

He credits her with the power of protecting her devotees from fearful things as diverse as lions and elephants, swarms of bees, serpents, sea monsters, vampires, and robbers.

THE TANTRIC PATH

A significant new influence in tantric texts is the *ḍākiṇī*, the sky-dancer, who guides men and women in their spiritual quests. The *ḍākiṇi* appears to both yogins and yoginīs at times of spiritual crisis. But she is experienced somewhat differently by male and female practitioners. For yogis, the *ḍākiṇi* is more likely to be perceived in a wrathful form, as an ugly old hag. A well-known example of such an encounter occurs in the life story of Nāropa, an eleventh-century Kashmiri brahman, who left his wife, became a monk, and pursued his studies at Nālandā University. One night, as Nāropa was bent over his books, an ugly old woman with thirty-seven marks of ugliness (red eyes, red hair, wrinkled, dark blue skin, hump-backed, lame, etc.) appeared before him. She asked him if he could understand the words he was reading. "Yes," he replied. She smiled. Then she asked him if he understood the meaning. Again, he replied, "Yes." This old hag wept. "Why?" Nāropa asked. She explained she was overjoyed when he said he could comprehend the words, but she wept when he also claimed to really know the meaning. "Since you're not awakened, you can't know the real meaning," she explained. "Being a scholar," she said, "you mistakenly believe that intellectual comprehension equals genuine awakening." In response to his question of how he might attain awakening, she told him to seek out her brother, the great yogi Tilopa. He left the university and sought Tilopa who, after putting him through a dozen painful tests of loyalty, accepted him as a student (Simmer-Brown 2001: 192–193).

Nāropa is one of eighty-four great adepts (*mahāsiddha*) whose hagiographies Abhayadatta, an Indian scholar of the eleventh–twelfth century, compiled in *Tales of the Eighty-Four Adepts* (*Caturśītisiddha-pravṛtti*). Most of Abhayadatta's stories focus on the crucial encounter between a lay practitioner and a charismatic guru whose guidance leads to liberation in one lifetime. The stories describe the adepts' extraordinary powers, acquired through meditation and esoteric yogic practices, that inspired others to follow the tantric path.

Dākinīs take on diverse appearances. In the story of Kukkuripa, a *ḍākinī* becomes a dog. Kukkuripa, an itinerant brahman beggar, finds her weak with hunger; and out of compassion he shares his food with her. He picks her up and carries her with him on his travels. When he goes out begging, she waits patiently for his return. The gods, impressed with the intensity of his religious devotion and his acquisition of magical powers, invite him to their divine realm. Even divine pleasures cannot prevent Kukkuripa from longing to see his

faithful dog again. When he finally returns and pats the joyful dog, she transforms into a radiant *ḍākinī*. She praises him for recognizing the transience of divine pleasures and teaches him how to achieve the symbolic union of perfect wisdom and skillful means (Robinson 1979: 128–30).

Kukkuripa, as a tantric guru, inspires Maṇibhadrā, one of the four female adepts profiled in Abhayadatta's text. She was an inquisitive thirteen-year-old girl when he came begging at her wealthy family's door. She asked him: "Why do live like this?" He replied:

> I am frightened by cyclic existence;
> And since I am afraid,
> I am working to accomplish
> the great joy of liberation.
> If I do not accomplish liberation
> In this auspicious lifetime,
> How will I be able to meet with it
> in my next life?
> If this precious life,
> which is like a jewel, were to be wrapped in impurity –
> such as a spouse – the desire of my life would be defeated.
> All sorts of ills would arise.
> Because I know this would happen,
> I avoid taking a wife.

(Robinson 1979: 208)

She gave him alms; and inspired by his words, she asked him to teach her how to attain liberation. She visited him secretly at night and received tantric initiations. She continued to practice but eventually married and had children. Twelve years passed before she met her guru again. As she returned home after meeting him, she tripped over the root of a tree and shattered the water pot she had been carrying. She remained focused on the broken pot until sundown, when she realized that:

> Living beings without beginning,
> Break the pot of the body.
> Why should I return home?
> My pot is now broken.
> I will not return to my home in samsara
> Now I will go to the great bliss.

(Robinson 1979: 210)

These narratives from divergent traditions within Indian Buddhism illustrate the powerful role that stories play in communicating both the intricacies of karma and rebirth and the practices necessary for achieving awakening. The prevalence of narratives – oral, written, and visual – and the complexity of recurrent themes within "story literature" challenge the misconception that Indian Buddhism is primarily concerned with abstruse philosophical reasoning and meditation.

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BUDDHISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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Craig J. Reynolds

INTRODUCTION

Theravāda Buddhism is the national religion of Burma, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand. Devotees are also to be found in Vietnam, particularly in the south, and also in Malaysia and Indonesia, the Muslim countries of the region. In the Theravāda tradition, sometimes referred to as Pāli Buddhism because of adherence to the scriptural tradition written in the Pāli language, homage is paid to the Three Gems: the Buddha; the Dhamma (the Buddha's teachings); and the Saṅgha (the monastic lineage). Acts of merit-making such as offering food to monks, donating in cash or kind for the construction of monastery buildings, and sponsoring ordinations anchor religious belief in the social world and ensure the religion's future. The maintenance of a healthy Saṅgha, properly ordained monks who observe the rules of the ascetic life, is necessary for Buddhism to prosper. In the Theravāda countries young men are encouraged to ordain as monks, even for a few weeks, before they marry, and many young boys in rural Southeast Asia also ordain as novices, serving as attendants to senior monks and acquiring an education while living in the monastery.

BUDDHISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Theravāda translates literally as "the way of the Elders" and for monks involves a form of ordination sanctified by the Saṅgha of Sri Lanka (Prapod 2010: 189). In Southeast Asia the Theravāda school became the predominant form of Buddhism in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when mainland kingdoms underwent structural changes and the Sinhalese form of the Theravāda began to enjoy royal patronage. This Buddhism came to be called "the religion of the south," referring to Buddhism in Lanka, Burma, and Siam (Blackburn 2010: 169). Monastic embassies sponsored by Southeast Asian kings to the Saṅgha in Lanka and pilgrimages to relics on the Emerald Isle created a fraternity of "southern" saṅghas that shared doctrinal authority and similar histories. These exchanges resulted in the establishment of monastic lineages as kings in both regions met the challenge of deteriorating monastic discipline during times of crisis.

In terms of doctrine and ritual, the dominant school is now Theravāda, although recent scholarship has been questioning the very idea of Theravāda as a distinct category (Skilling

et al. 2012). Elements of what might be identified as Mahāyāna belief and practice have been common from the earliest inscriptions in the region (Prapod 2010: 102–105; Skilling 1997: 98). The Barabuḍur in Java is a Mahāyāna temple built during the eighth century as a huge stone *maṇḍala*, an object of meditation for devotees to acquire mystic powers. Some scholars have suggested that the Buddhism practiced there was Tantric (Gomez and Woodward 1981: 48–50). Most Buddhists in Vietnam practice in the Mahāyāna tradition, but here too the situation is not simple. A Theravāda monastery was founded in Saigon in 1940 by a veterinarian who had studied meditation in Cambodia (DeVido 2007: 281). The complexity of Buddhist belief and practice, as well as a history of Brahmanism from the early centuries and the prevalence of spirit worship or animism, has been a recurrent focus in the study of Buddhism by anthropologists, historians, and specialists in religious studies. Efforts to construct models to show how the different religious strands function in the spiritual world of Southeast Asian peoples have led to a confusing terminology. Buddhist practice is "eclectic" or "syncretic" or must be explained in terms of functional specialization of the various strands of belief and practice.

EARLY HISTORY

Buddhism, along with other elements of Indic culture, first came to Southeast Asian shores on the wings of commerce. In the ninth and tenth centuries, Buddhist rulers of Śrīvijaya, the maritime empire that lay astride the Straits of Malacca, endowed monastery buildings in Bengal at Nālandā, the foremost center of international Buddhist learning at the time (Prapod 2010: 65–66).

Archaeological evidence of Buddhism includes stone *dhammacakra*, or the Wheel of the Law, testifying to the presence of Buddhist pilgrims in the early centuries CE. Stone and bronze images of the Buddha and reliquaries called *cedi* or *stūpa* are modeled on similar monuments in South Asia such as Sāñchī. Entombed in these structures are bits of the Buddha's body – hair, teeth, and bone. The association of this type of monument with the death of the Buddha preserved a pre-Buddhist meaning of the *stūpa* as life-engendering; architectural terms for the dome mean "egg" and "womb" (Swearer 2009: 80). A myth credits King Asoka (r. 272–236 BCE), an Indian monarch who ruled over a vast territory in the third century BCE, with having enshrined 84,000 relics in every corner of his empire. Some of the most magnificent Buddhist monuments, such as the Shwedagon pagoda in Burma and the ninth-century Barabuḍur in Central Java, are essentially *stūpa*.

Accounts of missions dispatched from India during the reign of Asoka Maurya in the third century BCE are almost certainly mythical, although some scholars credit the stories with a grain of truth (Skilling 1997: 101). Footprints of the Buddha in the form of foot-shaped impressions discovered in caves and on hilltops are traces, or perhaps more accurately symbols, of the peripatetic movements of the Buddha, the mendicant teacher who founded the religion (Prapod 2010: 59–63). According to the legendary histories of twelve shrines, the Buddha is supposed to have visited the northern mainland during his lifetime. Some of the histories state that relics of the Buddha were discovered at Sukhothai, a Thai kingdom in the thirteenth century (Keyes 1975: 78–79).

The arrival of Buddhism and other Indic religions occurred at the same time as a major transition in the history of the region, as petty chieftainships were transformed into larger polities (Reynolds 2006: 12–13). This development cannot be attributed to religion alone,

because commerce and the increasing social stratification that resulted – as well as the introduction of writing – also played a part.

The mutually beneficial relationship between Buddhism and kingship was forged at this time. Kings became major patrons, with King Asoka being the model of royal support for Burmese, Lao, and Siamese kings. The cult of the Buddha's relics popularized by Asoka was not only a singular expression of Buddhist piety but also a unifying instrument of imperial power (Swearer 2009: 77). A strong Saṅgha could be guaranteed only by a righteous ruler with the power to maintain order and provide the conditions in which the religion could prosper. For his part, the king offered generous patronage to the Saṅgha because it brought him merit and ensured a favorable reincarnation in the next life. The Buddha and the righteous ruler (*dhammarāja*) complemented each other: "the princely and the ascetic; power and compassion" (Swearer 2009: 109). Indeed, they were made out of the same quantity of meritorious matter.

The biography of the Buddha, narrated visually and in the sermons of monks, was a way of disseminating knowledge of the religion and attracting adherents in the population at large (see the chapters by Lang and Hayes in this volume). The life of the Buddha became popular through the circulation of Jātaka tales or birth stories of the Buddha before his awakening. The tales also appear on Barabuḍur, the enormous Mahāyāna *stūpa* built about 800 CE, and on Burmese temple walls such as those of the Ananda Temple in Pagan where they have been interpreted as a giant textbook for proselytizing the Buddha's teaching (Brown: 1997). Culminating the Jātaka cycle of 547 tales is the story of Vessantara, in which the Bodhisatta is depicted as a prince who gave away his children and wife in a supreme meritorious act of sacrifice. The *Vessantara Jātaka*, depicting the Bodhisatta as the exemplary man, selfless and generous, has been popular for centuries in rural Southeast Asia, where its narration and graphic portrayal are occasions for merit-making.

The rapidity of Buddhism's growth and prosperity in the region raise questions about the nature of religion before contact with South Asia. In the face of historical and archaeological evidence manifestly inadequate to answer these questions, the Indologist Paul Mus ventured a reconstruction of indigenous belief before the coming of Buddhism and Brahmanism (Mus 1975). While accepting that "animism" was inadequate to describe indigenous belief, he proposed that the inhabitants of ancient South Asia, Southeast Asia, and southern China saw spirits – disembodied human souls, spirits of land and water – present everywhere. A spirit is the vital essence of inanimate objects such as mountains or trees, and the spirit of the soil is the most important of all. The soil was divinized, giving rise to a cult of the lord of the soil. The concept of sacral kingship, both Buddhist and Hindu, in the history of the region was a natural extension of this lord of the soil (Prapod 2010: 114–15).

In the premodern period kings in the region were vigilant in their support for Buddhism. They made donations of land, labor, and capital for the upkeep of monasteries, and they sponsored monks to travel to South Asia for education and pilgrimage, for example the Tooth Relic at Kandy (Reynolds 1979). Land and labor donations to the Saṅgha were exempt from tax, and the Saṅgha in some kingdoms accumulated material wealth to the extent that it caused friction with the crown (Aung Thwin 1979). If discipline in the Saṅgha became lax, kings used their powers to sponsor the reordination of monks. The targets of these purges, or purifications, were monks who had been corrupted by commerce, who had taken up astrology, medicine, painting, carpentry and other crafts to make a living, or who were in possession of specie, livestock, or male and female slaves. The line that divided ascetic and householder had to be policed by secular authority. As that line is policed today, Buddhist

monks have skills as astrologers, healers, and painters, and even as entrepreneurs that are embraced by the community and not regarded as violating the monastic code (Vinaya).

An early and influential example was the fifteenth-century Mon ruler Dhammaceti (r. 1472–92), who had been a career monk before his enthronement. According to ten copies of the inscription that commemorates this event, King Dhammaceti thoroughly studied the Vinaya, the monastic book of discipline, and infused the local Saṅgha with new orthodoxy by dispatching sixteen Burmese monks to Sri Lanka where they were ordained according to the strictest protocols at the Kalyani River near where the Buddha was believed to have visited. On returning to Burma, the sixteen monks, who now formed a new leadership, ordained in turn another 15,666 existing monks and new monks afresh. This "Sinhalization" of the Burmese Saṅgha set in motion a process of continuously questioning the standards and values of the monastic order (Mendelson 1975: 50–53). In all the mainland countries, Lanka was a source of inspiration and prestige for art, architecture, ordination, and orthodox practice. Even the Lanka versions of the Buddha's life story had an impact on the way the Buddha's life was narrated in Southeast Asia (Nidhi 2005: 260–61).

COLONIALISM AND NATIONALISM

From the late eighteenth century, the dynamic interdependent relationship between monastic establishments and indigenous monarchies came under pressure as Western colonialism advanced. The clash of civilizations that resulted from this world historical process was particularly disruptive because Western imperialism encountered Southeast Asian monarchies that were on the ascendant. The differences in colonial practice and the character of colonial rule combined with the differences in the societies and political systems that met these challenges meant that the responses in each case were different. These clashes set in motion historical processes that ended with the extinction of absolute monarchies as one traditional sovereign after the other disappeared from the scene owing to colonial rule and the cooptation or exile of the royal families.

Between 1752 and 1802, new dynasties were founded in Burma, Siam, and Vietnam, in all three cases by warrior kings who left strong bureaucratic legacies. The historical relationship between kingship and patronage for the Saṅgha was bound to be tested. In the First Anglo–Burmese War of 1824, for example, British troops occupied the Shwedagon Pagoda, a gilded reliquary that had been a hallmark of Burmese and Mon royal patronage since the fourteenth century. The British authorities cooperated briefly with the Burmese crown in the upkeep of the Shwedagon and were thus inevitably drawn materially and symbolically into the fate of the monument (Edwards 2006: 200–202).

The apparent success of this cooperation with the relatively liberal and modernizing King Mindon (r. 1853–78) was not to last, however. In formal terms, British policy towards Buddhism was neutral owing to the principle of separating state and "church," in this case the Buddhist religion. In the Burmese context, such a policy fell far short of what was expected of the sovereign power, whose responsibilities included appointing the Buddhist primate. The Third Anglo–Burmese war ended in 1886 with the abolition of the monarchy and the exile of the royal family to India. The British declined to appoint a replacement for the primate when he died in 1895, a decision that caused disquiet in the monkhood and sowed the seeds of nationalist protest in subsequent decades (Matthews 1999: 28–29). In the new colonial world, French-ruled Cambodia and Laos also experienced a loss of support for the Saṅgha.

Despite these threats to the integrity of the Saṅgha and the chief source of its patronage, Buddhism was sufficiently resilient in its institutional makeup to respond creatively to the new conditions. The best example of this is the reform order that emerged in Siam in the 1830s. The founder was a prince who had been denied the throne in 1824 and later became the fourth Bangkok monarch, popularly known as King Mongkut (r. 1851–68). He entered the monastery in a move akin to taking "holy sanctuary" and set about scrutinizing monastic practice and the purity of ordination much as King Dhammaceti had done in the fifteenth century. Mongkut organized fresh ordinations on a raft in the river, so-called "water ordinations," in strict accordance with canonical protocols, and quickly attracted numbers of young disciples owing to his formidable intellect as well as his princely status. The Dhammayutika (Thammayut) order soon received royal patronage and has had permanent status in the Thai monastic establishment ever since (Tambiah 1976: chap. 11).

Strict adherence to the Buddhist canon (Tipiṭaka) has cast the reform as fundamentalist, but the movement did not owe its inspiration to re-ordination by monks from Lanka or to the monarch's dispatch of Siamese monks to Lanka to be ordained there. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Protestant and Catholic missionaries were in conversation with Mongkut, the monarch-to-be, as well as with other members of the elite. This contact has given the impression that the Dhammayutika movement was a "restoration" of strict monastic standards and, at the same time, an adaptation of those standards to Western science and "rationalism." This interpretation is rejected by Thai historians. It was no more or less "rational" or "scientific" than previous purifications of the religion, and the trends leading to its inception had begun several decades earlier. The movement emerged locally, the culmination of several decades' scrutiny by Siamese kings of monastic discipline (Nidhi 2005: 278–282). The term "Protestant Buddhism" for the movement is also misleading, because of Eurocentric overtones and because the genesis of the movement lay in conflict over monastic discipline rather than doctrine. This tension in explaining Buddhist reform by comparing it to the Protestant Reformation is common elsewhere in Asia (McMahan 2008: 10–11). Because of Protestant missionary activity in Sri Lanka during British rule, the term still has currency there (Gombrich 1988: chap. 7).

During the reign of Mongkut's son and successor, King Chulalongkorn (r. 1868–1910), the influence of the Dhammayutika reform order extended to northeastern Siam and Laos. In Cambodia the story of Khmer religious modernism cannot be told without reference to religious reform in Siam, where Khmer monks availed themselves of Buddhist scholasticism.

SIAMESE RELIGIOUS REFORM

So many Khmer monk-scholars took the arduous trip to Bangkok that the French colonial authorities suspected their activities were political. The *Gatilok* ("ways of behaving in the world"), a manual of Buddhist behavior, taught the importance of purification of conduct and "knowing how to analyze correctly" in order to deal with problems of everyday life (Hansen 2007: chap. 5). In a process that can only be called colonial collusion, Khmer efforts to come to terms with colonialism proceeded with French patronage through the establishment of the Buddhist Institute and the Royal Library. Early in the twentieth century French civil servants and French-educated Khmer ministers joined together in educational reform aimed at demythologizing Buddhism and reconstructing it as a "rational" religion, a decidedly European project.

The view that Buddhism in Siam and in the neighboring counties influenced by the Siamese reform initiated a more rational or more scientific approach to belief has been called into question (McDaniel 2008). The reform was elite-inspired, and whatever its origins indigenously, the Dhammayutika monks were closely associated with the centers of power be they colonial (Cambodia, Laos) or indigenous (Siam). Reforming monarchs such as Mindon in Burma and Chulalongkorn in Siam needed to appear more "modern" "progressive," and "civilized" than their predecessors. "Rationality" was a term in the rhetoric of Western missionaries, but it is clear from the way Mongkut performed his duties as king that Brahmanic ritual, astrological beliefs, and popular Thai religious practices continued as before and did not disappear on his enthronement (Johnson 1997: 248–249). Disputes and disagreements among the different monastic orders in Burma under King Mindon did not have to do with "rationality" in religion, but reflected concern with Vinaya purity in a process that continues without end in the Saṅgha (Mendelson 1975: chap. 2).

Siam was the only Theravāda kingdom not directly colonized, although in various ways the ruler's sovereignty was compromised, for example by extraterritorial treaties that exempted British and French subjects from Siamese law. In all other respects, however, the Siamese monarch retained his powers, and by the last quarter of the nineteenth century was the strongest and most prestigious Buddhist monarch in the world. For this reason, colonized Asian nations looked to the Siamese monarch for patronage. At the end of the nineteenth century, Sri Lankan monks appealed directly to the Siamese king for his support in reconstituting the Lankan monastic community by new ordinations. There had been an earlier history of this cross-fertilization among the Theravāda Saṅghas. Mon, Burman, and Siamese monastic lineages had been established in Sri Lanka, and a Siamese prince who had ordained in Lanka believed in the concept of greater Saṅgha unity among southern Buddhists. As Britain, the Lankan colonizer, was one of Siam's more benign colonial threats, the Siamese king thought it politic to decline the request (Blackburn 2010: chap. 5).

As the decades of colonial rule passed, Burmese, Cambodian, and Lao nationalisms had their origins in efforts to rehabilitate and sustain Buddhist institutions. In Burma, the young Men's Buddhist Association was founded in 1906, initially an organization of self-strengthening and renewal that evolved into a political movement (Matthews 1999: 30). The modern history of political activism by Burmese monks has been an ongoing topic of study, given the principle that extensive involvement by monks in lay affairs affects the sanctity of the Saṅgha (Mendelson 1975: 235). In Cambodia, Buddhism provided an intellectual space for the expression of Khmer culture, history, language, and literature, as well as for discontent about the colonial condition (Hansen 2004: chap. 2; Hansen 2007: 181), and in Laos the country's most renowned historian, Maha Sila Viravong, saw the nation's disintegration as the outcome of disrespect for the Saṅgha. Lao cultural and political life was a product of common ancestral descent and fidelity to Buddhism (Holt 2009: 104–105). The Buddhist revival in southern Vietnam that began in the 1920s was a similar response to colonial conditions (DeVido 2007). When the former colonies emerged as independent nation-states, the national communities and governments defined themselves as Buddhist even though significant numbers of ethnic peoples in each country were not practicing Buddhists. Vietnam was the exceptional case because of the north–south division. In Thailand Buddhism has also been enshrined in all manifestos of contemporary national identity (Reynolds 2003: chap. 1).

BUDDHISM AND SOCIETY TODAY

With its ancient textual tradition in the Tipiṭaka, a history of royal endorsement of orthodoxy, and a Saṅgha to preach and defend that orthodoxy, Buddhism would appear to be a religion solidly anchored in scripture. In fact, Buddhist belief in Southeast Asia has always been associated with the world of the spirits, understood as the vital essence of inanimate objects and disembodied human souls. The spirits have powers that must be harnessed or defended against, appeased or subjugated. South Asia, Southeast Asia, and southern China belong to the same cultural matrix, so the relationship between Buddhism and the spirit world in these regions is very similar. Indeed, Buddhism brought with it the mechanism of its own propagation, because it "arrived" in Southeast Asia already bound up with spirit worship.

Anthropologists continue to debate just how the dynamic between spirit worship and Buddhism functions. Almost all anthropological studies of Southeast Asian Buddhism address the issue in one way or another (Bertrand 2004: chap. 7; Brac de la Perrièr 2009a; Holt 2009: chap. 5; Tambiah 1970). In some cases, such as Burma, spirit cults have been understudied, which seems strange considering the daily devotional activity at the Swedagon Pagoda where guardian spirits play a part in the foundational legend of the monument (Brac de la Perrièr 2009b: 195; Edwards 2006: 199–200).

In the mostly agricultural world of Southeast Asia, appeasing spirits, including guardian spirits of mountain, stream, and forest, and harnessing the powers of nature shaped routines for rural and urban households alike. Buddhist festivals follow the rhythms of the agricultural cycle. Visākha Pūjā, the celebration of the birth, awakening, and death of the Buddha, occurs in May at the beginning of the rice-planting season. Māgha Pūjā, a celebration of the gathering of 1,250 disciples when the Buddha preached the summary of his teaching, falls in February after the harvest (Swearer 2009: 38).

As is the case with other religions, Buddhism holds out the promise of triumph over death, not through immortality or the cessation of the life spirit but also through reincarnation. The store of karma that accumulates may be "improved" by such meritorious acts as donations for monastery construction, offering food to monks at the completion of a new house, and sponsoring the casting of a Buddha image. The merit thus acquired may be transferred to relatives living or deceased. Ancestor worship is embedded in the pre-Buddhist cultural matrix of the region.

Buddhism in Southeast Asia has integrated other life transition ceremonies into its ritual calendar. Although in doctrinal terms Buddhism has little to do with marriage, at wedding ceremonies Buddhist monks may preach sermons for the protection and well-being of the bride and groom. Before marriage, ordination into the monkhood is deemed auspicious for young men as a meritorious act for parents, particularly mothers, as a reciprocal gesture for care given in the early years of life. In families of modest means, particularly in the countryside, ordination into the novitiate is a way for adolescent boys to acquire an inexpensive education and to improve their social and economic status. Myanmar society, in contrast to other Buddhist countries in the region, offers ordination for adolescent girls as well as boys in the *shinbyu* ceremony (Swearer 2009: 50–58).

Movements to bring women into the Saṅgha as fully-fledged ordinands, known as *bhikkhunī*, the female equivalent of male *bhikkhu*, have grown strongly in recent years. Buddhist religious practice has always privileged women in the ordination ritual itself that expresses the sacrifice the mother makes in releasing her son to the monkhood, and women can express their religious piety in public displays just as men do (Guthrie 2004: 134). In

early Cambodian history female ascetics who observed strict precepts are mentioned in the inscriptions, and the tradition continues today, as it does in Thailand where these women assist in the daily running of monasteries. Such women do not enjoy high economic status and are not fully ordained, and as a result activist women ascetics such as Chatsumarn Kabilsingh (Bhikkhunī Dhammananda, b. 1944; see the chapter by Tsomo in this volume) have campaigned for the full ordination of women (Guthrie 2004: 135). Kabilsingh is seeking to revive a tradition suppressed by the male-dominated Saṅgha (Kamala 1997: 284–286). The campaign for proper female ordination is an issue of rights and may be understood as a protest against prevailing views of official Saṅgha councils supported by some scriptures that place women lower than men (Ito 1999, 2004).

A familiar image of the Buddha portrays the teacher meditating in the lotus posture as he reaches his awakening. Monks seeking ideal conditions for meditation and the purist ascetic life made their way into the forests to refine their practice. These forest dwellers were called *thudong*, monks who followed strict ascetic routines, and in Thailand they formed a distinct forest tradition, particularly in the northeast where many famous *thudong* monks have resided. In both Thailand and Burma there have always been tensions between scripturally oriented monks and forest dwellers specializing in asceticism and meditation who are, in a sense, resisting formal institutional supervision (Kamala 1997: chap. 7; Rozenberg 2010: 29). The Thai monk Buddhadāsa (1906–93) transcended this tension, living in a remote forest monastery in southern Thailand and exerting an enormous influence on lay people and monks with his revisionist interpretations of the Buddha's teachings (Swearer 2009: 167–72; see Wiles in this volume).

The skill of meditation masters naturally draws laypeople into their presence. Meditation could be said to be the core message of Buddhism and, given that its neurocognitive effects are a matter of scientific fact, it has been promoted as a treatment for patients with AIDS and other life-threatening conditions (Swearer 2009: 178–83). The manual for laypeople in Burma's mass meditation movement provides a step-by-step guide to mindfulness that is the first stage on the path to awakening (Jordt 2007). Burma boasts many meditation masters; some of the most prominent ones, such as U Ba Khin (1899–1971), are not ordained (Houtman 1997). During the 1990s in post-war Cambodia, the walking meditation or *dhammayatra* taught by the Cambodian refugee-monk Maha Ghosananda (1929–2007) became a nonviolent campaign aimed at peacemaking and reconciliation after the years of trauma under the Khmer Rouge (Poethig 2004).

Since the early twentieth century when nationalist causes were couched in terms of defending and reviving Buddhism, the region has witnessed Buddhist revivals and new religious movements (Harris 2005: chap. 8; Marston 2004). In Thailand the Santi Asoke and Thammakai movements that began in the 1970s developed new saṅgha organizations and non-traditional devotional practices (Apinya 1993; Taylor 1993). The Thammakai – controversial because of its business practices but successful in numbers of devotees – has become a global enterprise with branches in more than thirty countries. From its origins Buddhism has been transnational, but modern information technology has given these new organizations the capacity to put down roots and grow anywhere, even in cyberspace. In recent decades, Buddhists from Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam who left the region to flee war or authoritarian rule have become overseas diasporas and sources of funding and other kinds of support. Southeast Asian peoples return to the region to visit a spirit medium, pay homage to an image, or sponsor an ordination. Discussion of Buddhism in a globalized world cannot fail to mention socially engaged Buddhism and one of its most

tireless advocates, the Thai activist writer and scholar Sulak Sivaraksa (Sulak 2005; Swearer 1996; see also the chapter by Darlington in this volume, which discusses environmental activism by monks in Southeast Asia).

POLITICS, WAR, AND VIOLENCE

Ever since monks disrobed to take the throne or kings temporarily abdicated to be ordained, monks have been linked to leadership. Power naturally has a political as well as a spiritual aspect in mainland Buddhist societies because of practices of empowerment inherent in the religion from its origins (Reynolds 2005). Local populations in mainland Southeast Asia responded to British and French colonial rule by taking part in millennial movements led by "men of merit" who were often ex-monks. Their campaigns drew on a messianic expectation that the Metteyya (Maitreya) Buddha would come at the end of the present era (Mendelson 1975: 76, 276). During the years of nationalism and revolution, monks in Burma agitated against colonial rule, and even the communist movements in Cambodia and Laos articulated their nationalist goals in Buddhist terms in the early stages of their struggles (Harris 2005: chap. 7; Holt 2009: 123–25). National governments from time to time have engaged monks to promote development programs, and monks have led protests against autocratic regimes, the destruction of the natural environment, or the erosion of cultural, moral and religious values. Self-immolations by Buddhists in southern Vietnam were violent political acts of defiance as well as spiritual acts of sacrifice (Do Thien 2007).

The ubiquity of war and violence in Buddhist societies is at first sight surprising for a religion with a reputation for pacifism and quiet meditation, but the just religious war is as ancient as King Asoka's campaigns (see the chapter by Keown in this volume). An early Lankan king is traditionally believed to have ridden into battle against the Tamils with a relic of the Buddha on his spear, and Southeast Asian warrior kings were known to return from campaigns with Buddha images as trophies of their conquests.

The call to defend Buddhism against its foreign and domestic enemies has been answered in several ways. Even though ecclesiastical rules prohibit soldiers from becoming monks, a covert military unit was established in Thailand in 2002 to ordain soldiers while they were on active duty. These military monks have been deployed to defend particular monasteries in southern Thailand where there has been loss of life in both Buddhist and Muslim communities over the past decade (Jerryson 2010: chap. 8). Earlier, during the anti-communist campaigns in the 1970s, the ultra-nationalist Phra Kittiwuttho (b. 1936) advocated the principle that violence against a communist was justified on the grounds that a communist is a manifestation of Māra, the embodiment of moral depravity, and as such is not a "complete person." Hence, it was not a sin to kill a communist. Military monks and Kittiwuttho's rationalization for killing bring to the surface the latent tendency for militant Buddhism in conditions of extremity.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Buddhist studies have now evolved to the point where mainland Southeast Asian Buddhism can be seen as a field of its own. This development makes it possible to see even more clearly how Buddhist communities and the saṅghas in the region as well as in Lanka benefited from mutual support, cross-fertilization, and the exchange of pilgrims and scholars. One of the obstacles to further progress in rendering the topic more regional and

thematic is that because of the languages required for research, researchers tend to work through the problems in national terms, such as "Burmese Buddhism," "Cambodian Buddhism," "Lao Buddhism," "Thai Buddhism," "Vietnamese Buddhism." Pāli and Pāli-Sanskrit hybrid may be the sacred languages that unified the religious communities, but the vernaculars in each country tend to fragment it. Few religious scholars possess more than one or two of the national languages, and so sometimes they cannot engage in comparisons and identify thematic continuities.

Despite these obstacles to comparative work, academics have attempted to look beyond national borders. The relationships between Buddhism in the various countries discussed here are clearer, the interactions of the monastic communities across the region can be more precisely identified, and the differences in practices and belief stand out in high relief and invite comparative study in ways that were unthinkable half a century ago (Blackburn 2010). The hold of canonical orthodoxy in pedagogy has also been called into question. The knowledge stored in the manuscript collections of northern monasteries is secular as well as religious, with medical and protective texts bound with grammars and ritual guides. The training of monk-teachers was not systematic, and the teaching materials were not standardized. The evidence points to an informal educational setting that valued individual initiative and the idiosyncratic approaches specific to each teacher rather than canonical accuracy and orthodoxy (McDaniel 2008). The interactions among the reform movements in Southeast Asian Buddhist kingdoms during the colonial period are now more visible than ever, and the idea that nineteenth-century Buddhist reformers bequeathed to future generations a more rational Buddhism has received its share of criticism (Johnson 1997). Overseas diasporas have infused Buddhism in the region with resources and renewed energy.

In terms of Buddhism's relationship with animism and the spirit world, religious studies specialists have begun to question the use of outdated terminology that characterized Buddhism as eclectic or syncretic. The hierarchical arrangement that placed Buddhism at the top and animism at the bottom is now an untenable thesis. Scholars are instead taking a more phenomenological approach by positioning themselves as observers of religious practices and figuring out how the different religious elements function in specific social, political, and cultural settings. Animistic and mystical elements are still very much part of Southeast Asian Buddhism today (McDaniel 2011).

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CHAPTER FOUR

SINITIC BUDDHISM IN CHINA, KOREA, AND JAPAN

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Scott Pacey

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism entered China several centuries after the Buddha's death.[1] From there, Buddhist doctrine made its way to Korea in the fourth century and Japan in the seventh. It continued to thrive and develop even as it declined in India, eventually coming to occupy a central position in East Asian religious and philosophical thought. This chapter provides an overview of Buddhism's journey from the Indic cultural sphere to its establishment and growth in China and East Asia. Our focus will be on the main Chinese schools and their counterparts in Japan and Korea: Tiantai zong 天台宗 (Jpn. Tendai shū; Kr. Ch'ont'ae chong), Huayan zong 華嚴宗 (Jpn. Kegon shū; Kr. Hwaŏm chong), Jingtu (Pure Land) zong 淨土宗 (Jpn. Jōdo shū; Kr. Chŏngt'o chong), and Chan zong 禪宗 (Jpn. Zenshū; Kr. Sŏnjong). We will also consider developments in the East Asian Buddhist world that have been important for its recent history and that will continue to be so for its future. We will begin, however, by examining Buddhism's arrival in China and how the Sinitic forms of Buddhism that subsequently developed were received in Korea and Japan.[2]

THE INTRODUCTION OF BUDDHISM TO EAST ASIA

According to the *Record of the Latter Han* (*Houhan ji* 後漢紀), the story of Buddhism in China – and hence East Asia – began with a dream. In his reverie, Emperor Ming 漢明帝 (r. 58–75 CE) of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) saw a "golden man." Seeking an explanation on waking, the emperor made inquiries with his advisors. One informed him of the Buddha – a "superhuman" individual – in the west. A delegation was subsequently sent in that direction, and it returned with information on the Dharma (Tsukamoto 1985a: 42). A text composed between the second and fifth centuries, the *Mouzi on the Settling of Doubts* (*Mouzi li huo lun* 牟子理惑論), elaborates further, stating that the expedition traveled to the Great Yuezhi (Da Yuezhi 大月氏) and returned with the *Sūtra in Forty-Two Sections* (*Sishi'er zhang jing* 四十二章經) (Tsukamoto 1985a: 41–45).[3] The Emperor then had a Buddhist temple built in the city of Luoyang (Tsukamoto 1985a: 44).

It is likely that in the Eastern Jin (317–420) the veracity of this general account was accepted (Tsukamoto 1985a: 43). Contemporary scholars, however, consider it more likely

that Buddhism arrived in China via the Silk Road in the first century CE. Then a major thoroughfare, the Silk Road wound its way through northern India and Central Asia and terminated in Luoyang, where the White Horse Temple (Baima si 白馬寺) was constructed in 65 CE. This in turn came to be associated with Emperor Ming's dream and the temple he constructed in Luoyang after the return of his envoy from the Yuezhi (Tsukamoto 1985a: 47).

Translators rendered Buddhist texts into Chinese as they were imported from Central Asia and India. Initially, few individuals had facility in both Sanskrit and Chinese. However, the fourth century saw translation projects headed by individuals who were more skilled in these languages, such as Daoan 道安 (312–385) and Kumārajīva 鳩摩羅什 (344–413). Another was Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–64), who studied with Buddhist teachers in India at the famed center of Buddhist learning, Nālandā. After his return to Tang China, he headed a large-scale translation project in Chang'an. Yijing 義淨 (635–713) also spent over two decades in India and translated numerous texts on his return (Ch'en 1972: 365–72). Monastics such as these are generally credited with improving the accuracy and readability of the Chinese translations.

The spread of Buddhism throughout East Asia was facilitated by its resonance with the region's main autochthonous religious and philosophical views: Confucianism, Daoism, Shintō, and folk beliefs. However, Buddhism encountered a mixture of both acceptance and rejection. On the one hand, early translators made use of perceived similarities to render Buddhist concepts in Chinese – a strategy known as *geyi* 格義, "concept-matching."[4] Han dynasty translations were often concerned with topics such as control of respiration, a subject that interested Chinese readers because it seemed to accord with Daoist methods of self-cultivation (Ch'en 1972: 49). On the other hand, Daoists interpreted these similarities to mean that Buddhism was really just a form of their tradition. For example, one apocryphal text attributed to Wang Fu 王浮 (265–316) – the *Sūtra on Laozi's Conversion of the Barbarians* (*Laozi huahu jing* 老子化胡經) – tells of how Laozi traveled to India, where he preached his doctrine as the Buddha.

On the other hand, the *Sutrā on the Great Peace* (*Taiping jing* 太平經), which dates from the sixth century, criticized Buddhists for their divergence from Confucian values (Ch'en 1972: 50–52). In response to the types of objections it raised, another text, the aforementioned *Mouzi on the Settling of Doubts* (which contained a version of the story of Emperor Ming's dream), was intended to dispel the notion that Buddhism is in conflict with Confucianism. A different work, *An Inquiry into the Origins of Humanity* (*Yuanren lun* 原人論) by Zongmi 宗密 (780–841), stated that Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism in fact complement each other – although ultimately, as a Buddhist, Zongmi considered the Dharma superior (see Gregory 1995). Over time, although tensions with Confucianism and Daoism remained, Buddhism came to be accepted as one of the "three teachings" (*sanjiao* 三教) alongside them. According to Stephen Teiser (1996: 21),

> Confucianism often functioned as a political ideology and a system of values; Daoism has been compared, inconsistently, to both an outlook on life and a system of gods and magic; and Buddhism offered, according to some analysts, a proper soteriology, an array of techniques and deities enabling one to achieve salvation in the other world.

As Teiser notes, it would be inaccurate to describe all of Chinese religion as being encompassed by these three teachings, which are themselves diverse. Throughout history,

however, each has contributed these unique features to the larger matrix of the Chinese religious life.

While Buddhism's situation remained in flux in China, it continued to make its way onward to Korea. When it appeared there, the peninsula was divided into three kingdoms: Koguryŏ (37 BCE–668 CE), Paekche (18–660), and Silla (57–935). The *Samguk sagi* (三國史記), written in 1145, records that monks arrived in Koguryŏ from the Former Qin (351–94) in the 370s (Vermeersch 2014: 65–66). Soon afterwards, the monastic Mālānanda 摩羅難陀 arrived in Pakeche from the Eastern Jin (317–420; Best 2005). In the early sixth century, Buddhism became firmly associated with Paekche's leadership (Best 2005: 20–21), which hoped its buddhas, bodhisattvas, and ceremonies could protect the state and help them secure political legitimacy (Best 2005: 24). Meanwhile, monastics brought the Dharma to Silla in the fifth century (Ahn 1989: 3). In each case, Buddhism was seen as a way to bolster the political power of ruling elites.

The political associations of Buddhism in Korea subsequently provided the channel for the religion to enter Japan, which the Yamato court then ruled from Nara. The *Nihongi* 日本紀, a historical work dating from 720, states that the king of Paekche sent Buddhist artifacts to the Soga clan – a powerful family within the Yamato polity – in 552 (Best 2005: 27–28; Sakamoto 1991: 42). Despite their positive reception, further promotion of Buddhism was thwarted when a plague was attributed to the Shintō gods who did not approve of Buddhist veneration. In 584, the Soga clan again received Korean Buddhist images. When another plague continued even after all traces of Buddhism had been removed, the Shintoists allowed Buddhist practice to continue (Tsunoda et al. 1964: 91–92).

Buddhism received further promotion after 592, when Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子 (574–622) – who was from the Soga clan – became prince regent (Tsunoda et al. 1964: 34). Along with his aunt, the Empress Suiko 推古天皇 (554–628), Shōtoku facilitated the importation of Buddhism along with other aspects of Chinese culture. In 604 he introduced a constitution which stated that subjects should cherish the three jewels (the Buddha, Dharma, and Monastic Community; Tsunoda et al. 1964: 47–48), thereby firmly establishing Buddhism as part of the Japanese religious landscape. His declaration is indicative of the fact that during "this period Buddhism was promoted as state policy, to be worshipped by the sovereign and the people together" (Sakamoto 1991: 72).

THE *AWAKENING OF FAITH*

As Buddhism solidified its position in China and the number of translated texts increased, monastics began to make sense of them on their own terms. This had implications for Buddhism in East Asia more generally. One of the most influential works in East Asian Buddhism, however, appears not have been Indian at all: the *Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論, or *Awakening of Faith*. Traditionally, this has been considered an authentic Indian document – composed in Sanskrit by Aśvaghoṣa 馬鳴 (ca. 80–150) and then translated into Chinese by Paramārtha 眞諦 (499–569). There is, however, no extant Sanskrit version, and doubts about its authenticity arose at an early stage. In 594, Fajing 法經 (fl. 594), a compiler of Buddhist texts, was already uncertain about its authenticity; Huijun 慧均 (fl. 574) and Jizang 吉藏 (549–623) regarded it as a forgery made by members of the Dilun school (Dilun zong 地論宗; Jpn. Jiron shū, Kr. Chiron chong, who followed one of two competing readings of the *Dāśabhūmika*; Liebenthal 1958: 157).

Nevertheless, the *Awakening of Faith* has been particularly important in the East Asian context, where it influenced the interpretation of discourses attributed to the Buddha (*sūtra*) and hence the formation of schools. Huiyuan 慧遠 (523–92), who studied under Huiguang 慧光 (471–ca. 550), the founder of the Southern Dilun school; the Korean monk Wŏnhyo 元曉 (617–86); Fazang (643–712), the third Huayan patriarch; and Zongmi, the sixth Huayan patriarch, all wrote important commentaries on it. The text also influenced the writings of the Chan monastic Shenxi 神秀 (606–706). Because it advocates faith in Amitābha, it was also important for some Pure Land practitioners (Hakeda 1967). It therefore appealed to a wide range of figures who were influential in the development of the Chinese Buddhist schools.

The *Awakening of Faith* holds that the universe is comprised of the "One Mind," which in turn is formed of "suchness" (in both its empty and nonempty forms) and *saṃsāra* – the world of rebirth. The pure, undefiled aspect of the mind is the "matrix of buddhas" (*tathāgata-garbha*, or buddha-nature). The impure aspect is the fundamental consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna* – the eighth consciousness of Yogācāra Buddhism) and the storehouse of karmic seeds that generate experience. While the mind is originally pure and awakened, it becomes obscured through delusion (Lusthaus 1998: 84–85; Hakeda 1967). Accordingly, Buddhist practice is conceived as a process of clearing away all that is blocking our true, undefiled nature from becoming manifest and allowing us to attain full awakening.

The idea that human beings have a pure inner nature cohered with long-running debates in Chinese philosophy (Gregory 1983: 235). In particular, the *Awakening of Faith*'s position seemed compatible with that of Mencius 孟子 (371–289 BCE), who believed that humans are naturally good. The understanding of the matrix of buddhas as an intrinsically pure inner core thus found a ready audience when it was transmitted to China in the third century (Gregory 1983: 234). This optimistic orientation concerning the human potential for attaining buddhahood remained an important aspect of East Asian Buddhist thinking. As we will see below, it was important for the Korean monastic Wŏnhyo 元曉 (617–86), and in Japan it provided the foundation for a belief called *hongaku shisō* 本覺思想 – the view that all beings have an innate capacity to become awakened, or already are. This has, however, come under criticism in recent years from Japanese scholars who see it as the source of problems ranging from gender stereotypes to political subservience, since the phenomenal world (or "the way things are") is seen as emerging from an ontological unity that cannot be questioned (see Swanson 1993).

TIANTAI

Let us now consider the process by which the main forms of Chinese Buddhism developed, beginning with Tiantai. Aside from their tendentious relationship with Confucianism and Daoism, one of the problems Chinese Buddhists encountered as their textual corpus grew was the internal incompatibility of doctrines. All Buddhist discourses (*sūtra*) begin with the words "Thus I have heard." Although no *sūtra*s were written during the Buddha's lifetime, according to tradition, his discourses were remembered by his attendant Ānanda and recited at the First Buddhist Council held shortly after his death. Devout Buddhists therefore believe that all *sūtra*s contain the Buddha's authentic teachings. Research has shown, however, that the *sūtra*s that comprise the various Buddhist canons were composed at different times and represent different paths of doctrinal development.

One solution to this dilemma was to periodize the Buddha's teachings. Although some exegetes – such as Huiguan 慧觀 (fourth to fifth centuries) – had offered classifications of this type, the first enduring scheme was proposed by the monastic Zhiyi 智顗 (538–97) in the sixth century. His doctrinal classification (*panjiao* 判教) was founded on the principle that the Buddha employed various expedient methods of teaching, altering his message according to the audiences he faced. In addition, the Buddha's career had progressed in stages, each of which was characterized by a different pedagogical approach.

According to Zhiyi, the Buddha preached the *Flower Garland Discourse* (*Avataṃsaka Sūtra*) during the first period immediately after his awakening. However, while this was an explicit presentation of the Dharma, it was incomprehensible to those who heard it – except for advanced bodhisattvas. Therefore, in the second stage, the Buddha focused on presenting only the basic aspects of his teachings – the Āgama *sūtra*s. In the third period, he progressed to Mahāyāna teachings and discussion of the bodhisattva. In the fourth period, he focused on Perfection of Wisdom (*Prajñāpāramitā*) texts and the doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). And in the fifth and final period, he explained that ultimately there is only one vehicle – the *ekayāna* – which encompasses the realized saint (*arhat*), solitary realizer (*pratyekabuddha*), and bodhisattva vehicles. The Buddha's use of expedient methods in imparting the Dharma was explained in his final teaching before his *parinirvāṇa*: the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka Sūtra*, or *Lotus Sūtra* (Ch'en 1972: 303–13).

Zhiyi also held that there are three aspects of reality (*san di* 三諦): it is empty and characterized by interdependence, but it also cannot be described as only empty or interdependent. Realization of this is the "perfect teaching" (*yuanjiao* 圓教; Bowring 2005: 119–25). Like the *Flower Garland Discourse*, this model provided a complete explication of the Dharma and teaches that all sentient beings are able to become buddhas. However, the *sūtra* also placed an emphasis on expediency and on suiting teachings to the capacity of the audience (Bowring 2005: 125–29). For this reason, the Tiantai school valued the *Lotus Sūtra* most highly.

The monk Ŭich'ŏn (1055–1101) subsequently established the school in Korea, where it is called Ch'ŏnt'ae (Vermeersch 2014: 76). The monk Che'gwan's 諦觀 (?–970) composition *Outline of the Tiantai Fourfold Teachings* became an important Tiantai text, both in Korea and in other areas of East Asia. He wrote it in China, where he had been invited by the king of Wuyue, who hoped to acquire lost Buddhist texts believed to be extant on the peninsula (Muller 2012).[5]

Tiantai (Jpn. Tendai) was brought to Japan by Saichō 最澄 (767–822) in 805. He first obtained works by Zhiyi in Japan but was eventually invited to take part in an imperial expedition to China that allowed him to visit Mt. Tiantai in 804. While there, he acquired a large collection of Buddhist texts and studied under Daosui 道邃 (eighth to ninth centuries) – the school's seventh patriarch (Bowring 2005: 115–18). Saichō's Tendai drew "T'ien-t'ai proper, esoteric Buddhism, Zen, and the bodhisattva precepts" into the framework of the perfect teaching (Hazama 1987: 102). Although he retreated to Mt. Hiei 比叡山, where he practiced and lectured on the *Lotus Sūtra*, he believed that social well-being comes from the pursuit of awakening. Many later contributors to Japanese Buddhism were influenced in some way by Tendai and the institution that developed out of the temple Saichō established on Mt. Hiei in 788 (Hazama 1987).

Aside from Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212) and Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), these include Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–82) – the founder of the Nichiren shū 日蓮宗 (Ch. Rilian zong; Kr. Illyŏn chong), or Nichiren school (see the chapter by Metraux in this volume). Drawing

from aspects of Buddhist thought then prominent in Japan, including chanting the name of the buddha Amitābha (Jpn. *nenbutsu* 念仏; Ch. *nianfo* 念佛; Kr. *yŏmbul*), belief in the age of the demise of the Dharma (Jpn. *mappō* 末法; Ch. *mofa*; Kr. *malbŏp*) – when awakening is impossible through one's own efforts – and esoteric teachings (真言 Jpn. *shingon*; Ch. *zhenyan*; Kr. *chin'ŏn*; Rodd 1980: 32), Nichiren urged his followers to purse the only method of practice that might prove efficacious during the present time of spiritual collapse: chanting "homage to the *Lotus Sūtra*" (*Namu Myōhō Rengekyō* 南無妙法蓮華經; a practice referred to as the *Daimoku* 題目). To facilitate practice, he designed the *honzon* 本尊 (Ch. *benzun*; Kr. *ponjon*) – a representation of the characters of the title of the *Lotus Sūtra* surrounded by the names of buddhas and bodhisattvas – which serves as a visual focus of faith (Rodd 1980: 41–42).

His insistence on these methods to the exclusion of all others put him in conflict with the institutionally powerful adherents of *nenbutsu*. However, even after death threats and exile, Nichiren continued to preach that the *Lotus Sūtra* is the only teaching suited to the age of *mappō*. Other practices such as *nenbutsu* and sitting meditation (Jpn. *zazen* 坐禪; Ch. *zuochan*; Kr. *chwasŏn*) lead to rebirth in a Buddhist hell and spell disaster for the country – which toward the end of his life faced invasion by the Mongols (Rodd 1980: 3–31). In the twentieth century, Sōka Gakkai 創價學會, an organization also based on Nichiren's soteriology, would become an enormously successful movement in Japan, and lineages based on his teachings have the largest collective following of any tradition in the country.

HUAYAN

While Tiantai exegetes held the *Lotus Sūtra* to be the pinnacle of the Buddha's teaching, the Huayan school granted this status to the *Flower Garland Discourse* (Cook 1994: 33). They asserted that while other *sūtra*s are expedient presentations of the Dharma, the *Flower Garland Discourse* is its most direct expression (Takakusu 1975: 119–122). Five patriarchs developed Huayan doctrine in China – Dushun 杜順 (557–640); his student, Zhiyan 智儼 (600–668); the third patriarch, Fazang 法藏 (643–712); Chengguan 澄觀 (738–839); and Zongmi (Takakusu 1975: 115–16).

The central theme of the *Flower Garland Discourse* is the interconnectedness and relativity of the phenomenal world – a message that is conveyed through the metaphor of Indra's net. In this, each knot contains a jewel (which represents a particular phenomenon) that reflects all of the other jewels. Each, therefore, reflects the entirety of the phenomenal world and can also be identified with it. Fazang illustrates this interconnectivity with the image of a building and a beam; both are reliant on each other, and hence their identity is relative to the perceiver. As such, causes can be defined as effects (and vice versa). On this basis, Fazang also claims that one simultaneously attains all stages on the bodhisattva path when one of them has been reached (Cook 1994: 78, 112).

Huayan exerted significant influence on other schools of Buddhism: the Chan exegetes Shitou Xiqian 石頭希遷 (700–790), Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一 (709–88), and Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 (720–814) all employed Huayan notions (Cook 1994: 17). Jizang 吉藏 (549–623) – the foremost scholar of the Three Treatises School (Sanlun zong 三論宗; Jpn. Sanron shū; Kr. Samnon chong), which focuses on Nāgārjuna's 龍樹 (ca. 150–250) and Āryadeva's 提婆 (ca. third century) writings on emptiness – was apparently influenced by Huayan notions of relativity (Cook 1994: 10–11). Its portrait of a complex universe in which the status of all phenomena – including states of purity and impurity – are in a sense

interchangeable can be related to the Pure Land school's cosmology and teachings on the possibility of self-purification and awakening.

Zhiyan's student Uisang 義湘 (625–702), was a principal Huayan (Kr. Hwaŏm) writer in Korea; he also knew Fazang. Uisang equated the Huayan ultimate truth concerning dharmas with the buddha-nature. As Buddhism in Korea came to be oriented toward the "harmonisation of all disputes" (*hwajaeng* 和諍) among the schools, another monk, Wŏnhyo, also attributed primacy to the *Flower Garland Discourse* and argued for the interpenetration of phenomena. This is again reflected in his treatises on the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* and the *Awakening of Faith* (Park 1999: 60). Wŏnhyo used the concepts of *chong* 宗 (doctrine) and *yo* 要 (essentials), as well as *kae* 開 (opening) and *hap* 合 (sealing) to show how there may be many different doctrines, but these have one essential meaning. Meanwhile, the notions of essence and function 體用 (*ch'e-yong*) denoted the *Awakening of Faith's* One Mind and the particular dharmas that arise from it.

Daoxuan 道璿 (702–760) and Fazang's student Simsang 審祥 (d. 742) transmitted Huayan (Jpn. Kegon) to Japan in the eighth century. The school had become well-known by the mid-eighth century; Emperor Shōmu (r. 724–249) had a large statue of Vairocana – the chief buddha of the *Flower Garland Discourse* – constructed in the Tōdai-ji Temple 東大寺 in Nara, the imperial capital. It seems that he thought of the "statue as symbolizing above all the emperor's spiritual authority over all lands and peoples in the Japanese state and … regarded converts and congregations mainly as instruments for strengthening state Buddhism" (Kōyū and Brown 1993: 406). After abdicating in 749, Shōmu entered the monastic order, while his daughter took over as empress.

PURE LAND

Pure Land thought centers on realms that have been purified of all defilement and delusion (Kloetzli 1989: 12). Its focus is on Amitābha and his Pure Land, Sukhāvatī, but Pure Land belief incorporates a variety of buddhas residing throughout the Buddhist cosmos (Nattier 2000: 74). Owing to their paradisiacal qualities and omnipresent opportunities for studying the Dharma and gaining awakening, Pure Lands are considered ideal places in which to seek rebirth. Achieving this is the main objective of practitioners.

Four Pure Lands have attracted the most interest in East Asian Buddhism. One of these is Abhirati, which is presided over by the buddha Akṣobhya; it is located in the east of the Buddhist cosmos. Bhaiṣajyaguru, the Medicine Buddha, presides over another eastern Pure Land. As his name suggests, Bhaiṣajyaguru has a particular concern for alleviating the suffering of people caused by disasters, poverty, and illness (see Birnbaum 1979). The most renowned of all Pure Lands, however, is Sukhāvatī. Located in the west, this realm is presided over by the buddha Amitābha. Sukhāvatī itself is perhaps the most resplendent of all Pure Lands; there, the Buddha's message can be experienced at every moment of one's existence. The feeling of wind on one's skin is enough to invoke the bliss of nirvana, while sounds teach of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, no-self, and the perfections (*pāramitā*). As a result, Sukhāvatī has been the preferred destination for most Pure Land devotees.

The conceptual material forming the basis of Pure Land belief developed in India between the first centuries BCE and CE (Fujita 1996: 10; see the chapter by Jones in this volume) – yet it was in East Asia that it became the focus of sustained commentary (Tanaka 1990: 13). At Lu Shan 廬山 in 402, the Chinese monk Huiyuan 慧遠 (334–416) famously assembled people to practice recitation of Amitābha's name, but "his principal aim seems

to have been dhyāna-concentration, Buddha-viewing, hearing the Dharma, the resolution of doubtful questions of doctrine, and the acquisition of prajñā-wisdom" (Tsukamoto 1985b: 858). A coherent set of Pure Land beliefs, centered on attaining rebirth in Sukhāvatī through the practice of *nianfo* and the grace of Amitābha, developed with its later thinkers in China: Tanluan 曇鸞 (488–544), Daochuo 道綽 (562–645), and Shandao 善導 (613–81). Tanluan laid the foundation for East Asian Pure Land belief by establishing three discourses (*sūtra*), focused on Sukhāvatī, as the most important: the *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經, or the *Longer Sukhāvatī Sūtra*; the *Amituo jing* 阿彌陀經, or *Shorter Sukhāvatī Sūtra*; and the *Guan wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經, or *Visualization Sūtra*.

In the *Treatise on the Differentiation of the Ten Levels* (*Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā-śastra*), the Indian Mādhyamika thinker Nāgārjuna stated that there are two paths of Buddhist practice: the first consists of reliance on the power of buddhas and bodhisattvas, and the second involves depending on one's own effort. This conception underlies Tanluan's approach. The latter is the most efficacious means for attaining awakening, since the visualization practices associated with Sukhāvatī and the recollection or recitation of Amitābha's name serve to ameliorate karmic deficits (Corless 1996). Based on his reading of Vasubandhu's commentarial work on the *Treatise on the Differentiation of the Ten Levels*, Tanluan outlined five practices: physical worship; oral praise; the resolve to be reborn in Sukhāvatī; visualization of Sukhāvatī, Amitābha, and other bodhisattvas; devoting merit to others; and returning to cyclic existence from Sukhāvatī for the benefit of other beings (Corless 1996).

Daochuo and Shandao later considered Pure Land practice to be the only method suited to this degenerate age – the period of *mofa*, or the decline of the Dharma. During such a time, it is impossible to attain awakening without reliance on the assistance of more able entities; the buddha Amitābha is supremely suited to perform this role. No longer were Pure Land techniques thought merely to exist alongside other forms of practice as they had been in the past. Daochuo – despairing of achieving awakening during the period of *mofa*, when there is no buddha present in the world and when comprehension of the Dharma is difficult – therefore advocated the exclusive pursuit of rebirth in Sukhāvatī through the practice of reciting Amitābha's name. His disciple Shandao went further still. For him, Amitābha's eighteenth vow in the *Longer Sukhāvatī Sūtra*, which states that those who recite his name ten times will be reborn in Sukhāvatī, refers merely to "sounds" – yet recitation of Amitābha's name remained the most important of practices (Chappell 1996).

As Robert Sharf notes (2002b: 283), there was in fact no formal system of Pure Land monasteries, nor a Pure Land system of Dharma transmission. Moreover, the inaugural developers of Pure Land doctrine were thought of "not as exponents of a singular form of Buddhism but rather as accomplished scriptural commentators and/or specialists in *dhyāna*" (Sharf 2002b: 297–98). After Pure Land belief was transmitted to Japan in the eighth century (Shigematsu 1996), it was institutionalized in the form of the Jōdo shū 浄土宗, founded by Hōnen. According to Sharf (2002b: 298), it was in fact Hōnen who constructed a lineage of Pure Land patriarchs and considered Pure Land to be a school, rather than a body of ideas that permeated much of Chinese Buddhist thinking (Sharf 2002b: 301).

Hōnen's initial Buddhist training was in Tendai at Mt. Hiei. In 1175 he encountered Shandao's commentary on the *Visualization Sūtra* and, convinced of the critical nature of Amitābha's name as a liberative technique in the age of degenerate Dharma, he came to advocate liberation solely through this practice and reliance on the salvific power of Amitābha. One may therefore bypass the more difficult path outlined by Nāgārjuna, that of

relying on one's own efforts (which is unlikely to bring results), and instead rely on the power of Amitābha's vows to gain rebirth in Sukhāvatī (*Senchakushū* English Translation Project 1998).

His disciple Shinran founded the Jōdo shinshū 浄土真宗 (Ch. Jingtu zhenzong; Kr. Chŏngt'o chinjong). Like Hōnen, Shinran also began his studies in the Tendai tradition at Mt. Hiei, but left to become Hōnen's disciple in 1201. He shared his master's views on the importance of *nenbutsu*, but also emphasized the importance of faith in Amitābha – it is his *grace* that is in fact behind rebirth in Sukhāvatī. Realization of this is necessary in order to attain the highest level of rebirth in the Pure Land. Submitting to Amitābha's grace leads to wisdom replacing one's own delusion in a process of conversion (Unno 1996: 320; Ueda and Hirota 1989). With his belief in the age of degenerate Dharma and emphasis on the power of *nenbutsu*, Shinran deemphasized aspects of monastic discipline (*vinaya*). (He married and had children.) Meanwhile, his emphasis on faith and Amitābha's salvific power led him to conclude that Amitābha is focused on helping especially sinful individuals to be reborn in Sukhāvatī – a point that seems contrary to the Mahāyāna emphasis on the practitioner's efforts (Dobbins 1989). Shinran thus presented a more faith-oriented version of Pure Land belief, focused on Amitābha's capacity and willingness to save.

CHAN

Chan focuses on meditation as the path to insight aimed at attaining liberation. It is frequently asserted that because they were not textual traditions, Chan and Pure Land were the only forms of Chinese Buddhism to survive the rebellion mounted by An Lushan 安祿山 (703–57) against the Tang in 755, and Emperor Wuzong's persecution of Buddhism in 845 (Sharf 2002a: 6); the monastic Yongming Yanshou 永明延壽 (904–76) then combined Chan and Pure Land practice. As Robert Sharf (2002a: 8) points out, however, Chan made use of texts, and a diverse and rich Buddhist tradition continued to exist in China after the Tang. Yanshou himself also advocated a variety of practices (Sharf 2002b: 311–12; Welter 2010). According to Sharf (2002b: 308–309), "all available evidence suggests that early Ch'an masters did not reject the practice of *nien-fo* per se; on the contrary, *nien-fo* was widely practiced in their communities" (2002b: 314). Chan and Pure Land practices, then, often went hand-in-hand (Sharf 2002b: 321).

The *Five Records of the Lamp* 五燈錄 (Ch. *Wu deng lu*; Jpn. *Gotōroku*), which were composed in the Song dynasty (960–1279), are in agreement concerning the identities of the first five patriarchs of Chinese Chan (Dumoulin 2005: 98). While the proliferation of Chan ideas between teachers and disciples was likely to have been a much more complex process than is described in Chan genealogies (McRae 2003), traditional sources hold that the first patriarch of Chan in China was Bodhidharma 菩提達磨. Purportedly born at the end of the fifth century, Bodhidharma belonged to a lineage of teachers and disciples that stretched back to the Buddha himself. The Buddha had provided the first instruction in Chan when he held up a flower and smiled; only his disciple Mahākāśyapa understood, thus establishing Chan's first master–disciple relationship. Bodhidharma was the twenty-eighth Indian patriarch in this line of transmission.

After he brought Chan eastward, he also became its first patriarch in China. Among the extraordinary feats he reportedly performed there, Bodhidharma meditated in front of a wall in the Shaolin Monastery 少林寺 for nine years (Dumoulin 1979: 36). Following on from him was his disciple – and the second patriarch of Chinese Chan – Huike 慧可 (484–590)

(Dumoulin 2005: 94–95). Huike was subsequently followed by the patriarchs Sengcan 僧璨 (d. 606), Daoxin 道信 (580–651), and Hongren 弘忍 (601–74) (Dumoulin 2005: 94–99).

Disputes regarding the identity of the sixth patriarch, however, led to Chinese Chan supposedly being divided into two schools: one in China's north (which held that awakening is gradual), and the other in the south (which maintained that it is sudden) (Dumoulin 2005: 157). This division was in fact the creation of the monastic Shenhui 神會 (668–760) – a disciple of Hongren and advocate of sudden awakening – at a debate at Huatai 滑台 in 732. It was based on the fact that two disciples of Hongren, Shenxiu and Huineng 慧能 (638–713), were located in the north and south respectively. Prior to this, practitioners did not consider themselves part of such geographically aligned schools.

According to the ninth-century *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* (*Liuzu dashi fabaotan jing* 六祖大師法寶壇經), which contains teachings attributed to Huineng and is purported to have been written by polemicists, Hongren asked his students to "compose a poem to indicate the degree of their enlightenment" (Dumoulin 1979: 44). Huineng was illiterate and not an ordained monastic; he worked in the monastery's threshing room and had to dictate his poem to a scribe (Hershock 2005: 98–99). This account pitches Huineng's poem against that of the more erudite Shenxiu. Both compared the mind to a mirror, but for Shenxiu the mind must be gradually and repetitively wiped clean of dust (or mental defilements). Huineng's poem, however, described the nonexistence of both the mind and defilements, thereby presenting a more fundamental ontology and mode of practice. On the basis of these poems, Hongren later made Huineng his successor and the sixth patriarch of Chinese Chan (Dumoulin 1979: 42–52).

Shenhui thus argued that there is an unbroken line of Dharma transmission from Bodhidharma to the sixth patriarch, Huineng, and that the doctrine of sudden awakening represents Bodhidharma's – and the Buddha's – correct teaching (Dumoulin 2005: 111–15). According to John McRae (1987: 228), however, Shenhui's presentation of Huineng's ideas most likely tells us more about Shenhui than Huineng. Research has shown that the *Platform Sūtra* itself was written after Shenhui's death; Shenhui also participated in the northern Chan milieu prior to any sudden-gradual division (McRae 1987: 251). Northern Chan monastics exalted Chan as a tool for awakening over practice aimed at gaining merit. His focus on sudden awakening coheres with this northern emphasis on proselytization. Meanwhile, Shenhui himself paid less attention to subsequent practice and accepted that progress would be gradual after conversion (McRae 1987: 254). The appeal of his position lay, however, in his notion of becoming awakened suddenly, rather than over a long period of time and through years (or countless eons) of effort – thus also making the prospect of awakening more accessible to laypeople (McRae 1987: 255).

In the Tang and Song (960–1279), Chan developed into five different "houses." The Guiyang zong 溈仰宗 (Jpn. Kigō shū; Kr. Wi'ang chong) was founded by Guishan Lingyu 溈山靈裕 (771–853) and his student Yangshan Huiji 仰山慧寂 (814–890); its name derives from two mountains that lay near their domiciles. Interactions in the school were comprised of statements, actions, and silences; practitioners also employed the imagery of the circle, which represents "perfect enlightenment, the original face one had before one was born, or the cosmic Buddha body" (Dumoulin 2005: 217). The Yunmen zong 雲門宗 (Jpn. Unmon shū; Kr. Unmun chong) was founded by Yunmen Wenyan 雲門文偃 (d. 949) and was characterized by the provision of abrupt, concise responses to inquiries. The Fayan zong 法眼宗 (Jpn. Hōgen shū; Kr. Pŏb'an jong) was founded by Fayan Wenyi 法眼文益 (885–958); he often taught by repeating questions posed to him. Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄

(d. 867) – the founder of the Linji zong 臨濟宗 (Jpn. Rinzai shū; Kr. Imje chong) school – characteristically stunned his students into awakening by striking them or shouting (Dumoulin 1979: 61–62).

From the Song, the Linji school made use of the *gongan* 公案 (Jpn. *kōan*; Kr. *kong'an*), or a recorded saying of a master akin to a riddle, that can be understood only by changing one's mode of thought. Finally, the Caodong zong 曹洞宗 (Jpn. Sōtō shū; Kr. Chodong chong) is named after its two founders: Dongshan 洞山 (807–69) and Caoshan 曹山 (840–901). Caodong made use of the five stages 五位 (Ch. *wuwei*; Jpn. *goi*; Kr. *owi*) – verses that promote insight into the unity of the absolute and the phenomenal (Dumoulin 1979: 60–62; 2005: 213–36). In the Song, Hongzhi Zhengjue 宏智正覺 (1091–1157) advocated "silent illumination Chan" 默照禅 (Ch. *mozhao chan*; Jpn. *mokushō zen*; Kr. *mukcho sŏn*), the practice of quietly sitting, in contrast to the Linji school's Dahui Zonggao 大慧宗杲 (1089–1163), who advocated use of the *gongan* (Dumoulin 2005: 256–61).

Chan also became a dominant tradition in Korea and Japan. Sŏn (Chan) entered Korea with Pŏmnang 法朗 (fl. 632–46), who studied under Daoxin in China. The "Nine Mountains" – or sites of Sŏn practice and thought – subsequently arose and became the dominant Sŏn school. Later, one of Korea's most important monastics – Chinul 知訥 (1158–1210) – merged the traditions of textual Buddhism and meditation, advocating sudden awakening and subsequent gradual practice (Buswell 1999: 90) while also introducing the *hwadu* (or *kōan*) to the peninsula (Buswell 1999: 96). In particular, he held that practice in Sŏn will lead to one realizing both one's own innate awakening and the nature of the relationships described in Hwaŏm (see Buswell 1999). Chinul's innovations proved significant and enduring within Korean Buddhism.

One of the dominant figures in Japanese Zen is Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253) who, after studies at Mt. Hiei, spent time practicing in the Caodong tradition at Mt. Tiantong 天童山 in China. After his return to Japan, he mainly remained in Kyōto where he promoted sitting meditation, or *zazen* 坐禅, as the means of manifesting one's buddha-nature (Dumoulin 1979). Dōgen also presented an expanded notion of the matrix of buddhas and held that nonsentient beings, as well as sentient ones, are the buddha-nature (Dumoulin 1979: 104–7). He advanced what Heinrich Dumoulin (1979: 107) called a "radical realism," in which "the mind and things are real in the same sense; they are Buddha-nature, and as such are one." The buddha-nature is in one sense characterized by permanency because it is omnipresent, but reality itself is constantly in flux, making the buddha-nature, in another sense, impermanent (Dumoulin 1979: 122). Realization of this through the process of *zazen* is the achievement of awakening.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

While the above overview focuses on premodern history, Buddhism in East Asia has continued to evolve in more recent times. The political and intellectual climate of the early twentieth century led some Chinese Buddhists to redefine the Dharma in terms of modern values and social utility. The chief representative of this movement was the monastic Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), who developed what he called "Buddhism for the human world" (*renjian Fojiao* 人間佛教) – an articulation of the Dharma that emphasizes its similarities with science and contemporary political ideologies – particularly the thought of Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925). Taixu also lent a worldly focus to Pure Land thought, arguing that the drive to create a "Pure Land in the human world" (*renjian jingtu* 人間淨土) – a society

based on Buddhist principles – is an accurate expression of the Dharma's relevance to worldly life (Pittman 2001; Jones 1999: 2003).

These ideas have been further developed since Taixu's death. In Taiwan, several large Buddhist organizations have drawn inspiration from them, including Ciji 慈濟, Foguang Shan 佛光山, and Fagu Shan 法鼓山. In China, the 2002 constitution of the Chinese Buddhist Association (Zhongguo Fojiao Xiehui 中國佛教協會) also formally advocated Buddhism for the human world. The former president of the Association, the layman Zhao Puchu 趙朴初 (1907–2000), echoed Taixu's ideal of a socially engaged Buddhism, bringing his ideas in line with China's political landscape.

Similar ideas arose elsewhere in East Asia, also due to the confrontation with modernity. During Japan's modernization drive in the Meiji era (1868–1912), it became common for monks to marry and drink alcohol (legal injunctions against these practices were removed in 1872) – thereby becoming socially integrated individuals. Through the influence of Japanese Buddhist missionaries in the late nineteenth century, and during the Japanese occupation between 1910 and 1945, this custom also took hold in Korea. Moreover, the early twentieth century gave rise to a new Buddhist movement on the peninsula. In 1916, the layman Sot'aesan 少太山 (1891–1943) founded a Buddhist society, inspired by his reading of the *Diamond Sūtra*. Sot'aesan considered Buddhism to be too removed from society, and its texts – in classical Chinese – difficult for the laity to comprehend. He began publishing texts that were easier to understand, simplified Buddhist ritual, and allowed monks to marry while requiring them to do productive work. After Sot'aesan's death, the movement's second Dharma master, Chŏngsan 鼎山 (1900–1962), took control of the society; Chŏngsan named his teachings *Wŏnbulgyo* (*Wŏnbulgyo* 圓佛教) – or Won Buddhism – in 1947.

Won Buddhists pursue a mode of practice centered on a circle symbolizing the truth body (*dharma-kāya*), called the *irwŏnsang* 一圓相. In turn, the Won Buddhist "path of practice aims at perfecting the three aspects of *Dharmakāya* of one's own nature, viz., precepts (*śīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*prajñā*)" (Chung 2010: 74–75). He regarded the source of all conflict as mutual resentment caused by ignorance of our common origins in the truth body – and thus sought to replace this with a sense of gratitude, thereby removing the source of conflict (Pye 2002). Although Sot'aesan made the *irwŏnsang* "the object of religious worship and the standard of practice" (Chung 2010: 76), he also advocated the practice of Zen, along with other techniques such as chanting, in daily life.

The modern period has also seen the formation of another lay-based movement: Sōka Gakkai 創価学会, or "Value Creation Society." Sōka Gakkai traces its roots back to Makiguchi Tsunesaburō 牧口 常三郎 (1871–1944) – a Japanese teacher who, in 1937, founded an educational society based on Nichiren's teachings called the Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai 創価教育学会. This was devoted to his pedagogical ideals of "benefit, beauty and goodness (the satisfaction, respectively, of material, spiritual and altruistic desires)" (Wilson and Dobbelaere 1994: 9).

Makiguchi and his student Toda Jōsei 戸田 城聖 (1900–1958) were imprisoned in 1943 for refusing to comply with government requirements as part of the imposition of State Shintō (Wilson and Dobbelaere 1994: 10). While Makiguchi died in jail, after the war the movement continued to grow under Toda's leadership. Followers employed an aggressive proselytization policy based on Nichiren's assertion that in the age of degenerate Dharma teachings that diverge from the *Lotus Sūtra* are inappropriate and ineffective. During the tenure of the third president, Ikeda Daisaku 池田 大作 (1928–), Sōka Gakkai also sponsored

cultural activities and founded schools, a university, and a political party – Kōmeitō 公明党 – which is closely aligned with the organization (Wilson and Dobbelaere 1994: 11).

Sōka Gakkai "teaches that Nichiren was the physical incarnation of the highest spiritual principle, even superseding Śākyamuni. Further, it teaches that Nichiren's *Gohonzon* (*maṇḍala*), on which is drawn the title of the *Lotus Sutra*, embodies the teachings of the true Buddha and contains the power to bring happiness to those who worship before it" (Metraux 1996: 368). With their common basis in Nichiren's teachings, Sōka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū 日蓮正宗 initially maintained a cooperative relationship. In the latter decades of the twentieth century, however, they grew apart. In 1976 and 1977, Ikeda gave speeches in which he claimed that the chanting the *Dai Gohonzon* 大御本尊, as the fundamental mode of practice, is more important than the distinction between the clergy and the laity. While Ikeda recanted, in 1990 and 1991, divisions again flared. This time, unable to resolve these fundamental differences, Nichiren Shōshū and Sōka Gakkai parted ways (Wilson and Dobbelaere 1994: 242–43).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on the Chinese schools of Buddhism and their importation and development in neighboring Korea and Japan. However, Robert Buswell (1986: 199–200) has noted that the notion of a "comprehensive 'East Asian' Buddhism" may be more accurate than the division of pre-modern Buddhisms in East Asia into national typologies. He observes that Korean monastics "would probably have been more apt to consider themselves members of an ordination line and monastic lineage, a school of thought, or a tradition of practice than as 'Korean Buddhists'" (Buswell 2005: 8–9). In tracing their sources of legitimacy back to Śākyamuni, "their vision of a universal Buddhist tradition existed side by side with such particularities as 'China,' 'Korea,' and 'Japan'" (Buswell 1998: 84). Located close to each other geographically, and writing in classical Chinese, Buddhist monastics from across East Asia thus participated in a discursive community that transcended political borders.

In this context, Buddhists from outside of China helped to develop forms of Buddhism that built on these "Sinitic" types. In time, a great diversity of divergent and indigenous forms arose. "New" texts such as the *Awakening of Faith*, which claims Indic origins but was composed in China, helped drive these developments and made Buddhism acceptable in East Asian contexts. In more recent times, this process of development has not halted. Buddhism in East Asia has continued to evolve; large Buddhist organizations have emerged that are led by, or comprised mainly of, lay-members who have extended their efforts into the realms of education, philanthropy, and politics. Unlike much of Buddhism's past in the region, its recent history can be more fully documented. The connections between present-day Chinese, Korean, and Japanese developments, as well as their relationship to the past and their trajectories into the future, will be fascinating to watch.

NOTES

1   There is disagreement over precisely when this was, but Ruegg (1999: 82–87) placed it somewhere between 420 and 350 BCE.
2   Buddhism's transmission from India to China, and then to Korea and Japan, as well as the subsequent rise of the main East Asian schools, was a complex process. As Robert Sharf (2002a:

7) has noted, the "master narrative" of Buddhism's introduction to China largely stems from reliance on polemical historical sources (2002a: 8). Moreover, the divisions between schools also were often not rigid (Sharf, 2002a: 9). However, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to contribute to the provision of alternative models.

3 On the Yuezhi and the Kushan Empire, see Benjamin (2007).

4 On this, for example, see Lai (1979).

5 Charles Muller's introduction to and translation of this text is available on the internet at www.acmuller.net/kor-bud/sagyoui.html.

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HIMALAYAN BUDDHISM
Traditions Among the Newars and Other Tibeto-Burman Peoples

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Todd Lewis

INTRODUCTION

Found across the periphery of both the North Indian and Tibetan cultural regions, Buddhist traditions across the Himalayas have been shaped by their distinct geographical locations. Peoples sharing a common language, kinship ties, and Buddhist cultural traditions have come to occupy their own ethnographic niches across this extraordinary mountainous region, with their subsistence a unique combination of fixed crop agriculture, animal husbandry, and trade. Nowhere in the Buddhist world is it more evident that celibate monastic Buddhism is a luxury for societies: in the Himalayan frontier zone, many communities adopted Buddhism, but in a more minimalist form, with small monastery-temples and a householder saṃgha (Buddhist community).

Most Himalayan Buddhists speak dialects of central Tibetan or "Tibeto-Burman" languages, the latter a linguistic designation of limited utility; it indicates their being speakers of non-Indo-European languages whose native tongue is also unintelligible to central Tibetan speakers.

The known Buddhist groups to be discussed here – in Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh, as well as those in modern Nepal and Bhutan – share many common traits as well as exceptional differences. Much remains unknown, regarding both group origins and contemporary practices; scholarship has been scant and most of the studies completed in the past forty years have become, by 2015, outdated as many changes have altered the lives of individuals and entire communities.

Like the Himalayan environment across this 1,500-mile chain, where the landforms include a rich variety of ecological niches, so too have the various Himalayan peoples adopted Buddhism according to the logic of their own geographic and socio-cultural circumstances. One variable of profound significance is how each Buddhist community in the region was tied to the region's political states. Today, being part of India, China, Pakistan, or Nepal causes each group to comply with different laws regarding land tenure and taxation and requires it to fit into these very different national cultures. Only one Himalayan state, Bhutan, has Buddhism as its state religion; in all the others, Himalayan Buddhists exist as minorities in their respective greater polities.

ANCIENT HISTORY

Although the Himalayas could have been seen on a clear day from some places in the ancient region of Kapilavastu, the Buddha's home for his first twenty-nine years, there is no evidence in the early canonical records of Śākyamuni Buddha visiting, or of an early saṃgha being established, in the Himalayan middle hills or beyond. What is found in the popular stories of the early canons is an awareness of Mount Kailash and Lake Manosarowar as holy places, and of "snow mountains" or "Himavat" as regions for ascetic retreat, as well as venues where gods and other spirits dwell. This should not be surprising: since the broad alluvial Gangetic plain was still only dotted by early cities and villages, and since most ancient agricultural lands were surrounded by vast tracts of jungle, humans could find new lands to clear nearby and so had no compelling reason to settle in the mountains where the soils were less fertile, easily arable land was rare, and subsistence was much harder. (For this reason, isolated hunter-gatherer groups existed in the mid-montane Himalayas then and were still found in isolated regions there until the last decade.)

The earliest groups to affect the region by the turn of the Common Era were Indic peoples who pioneered trade and the expansion of the Gangetic states; this occurred first, in all likelihood, in relation to pilgrimage routes to sacred locations close to the Himalayan peaks, holy lakes, or river confluences (*tīrtha*). These incursions drew areas of the region under the influence of itinerant ascetics, both brahmans and heterodox holy men; by this time, it seems certain that individual Buddhists followed these expanding religious networks that began to link the plains to the mountains. Among the inscriptions set up by the great king Aśoka (ruled 273–232 BCE), there are several among the dozens of places mentioned where he sent "emissaries of Dharma" that were likely in the northwest Himalayas.

As the first large empires formed in the centuries after the Buddha, the Himalayas came to be identified as a border, or frontier zone (*pratyanta*). It is likely that the Buddhist saṃgha had by then entered this region. One archeological discovery that suggests this was at the important *stūpa* complex at Sanchi. Found there was a relic container of a monk named Majjhima that on its outside had the following words inscribed: "relics of the great teacher of Himalayan people." Exactly what place or places were meant by the "Himavat" in this record, however, remains undetermined.

The Pāli *Jātaka*s (stories of the Buddha's past births) that were codified by the turn of the common era often refer to the region; and then a few centuries later, in Sanskrit Buddhist literature there are accounts of saint-missionary figures such as Padmasambhava (ca. seventh–eighth centuries) going into the mountainous regions to spread the Dharma. This is a pattern of influences from the southern plains that would continue for the next 500 years, until the extinction of the tradition across the Gangetic plains after 1200 CE.

What is most certain historically is that early Buddhist monks and monasteries, following the missionary ethos of the Buddha, spread out initially across the trade routes. The great northern route, the *Uttarapatha*, linked the Gangetic plain westward to the Indus watershed and beyond. This route established the monastic migration corridors in antiquity; where the *Uttarapatha* met trade routes going northward toward Central Asia, they facilitated the faith's spread to highland Gandhara and Kashmir, a process likely intensified under Aśoka that grew in significance after 100 BCE.

The introduction of Buddhism into other regions in the Himalayas likely followed the same pattern as in the Gangetic plain and Kashmir. Merchants and political figures built the first modest monasteries in emerging settlements and along trade routes, seeking legitimation,

ritual protections, and merit for themselves on earth and in the afterlife; as these towns grew, so did their Buddhist institutions.

KASHMIR VALLEY

The great expanse of the fertile Kashmir Valley, and its location as a prosperous entrepot on a southern branch from the great trans-Eurasian silk/horse route, enabled this region to eventually become the second key center of early Indic Buddhism. It was so important that, according to a succession of accounts from Chinese pilgrims from the fifth to the seventh centuries, it was a land dotted with over a hundred impressive monasteries and home to some of the greatest Indian Buddhist monk-scholars and sages of subsequent centuries. Ideas and Buddhist institutions seem to have evolved creatively in this region. On the latter, we have the remarkable history of Kashmir by the writer Kalhana (ca. twelfth century). This work, called *River of Kings* (*Rājataraṅgiṇī*), reports that in its later stages the Buddhist Saṃgha included both "celibate" and "married" members, a development of great interest in light of the Buddha's injunctions that monks refrain from sex and entanglements with women, but the exact nature of which remains still unclear. What is certain is that it was Kashmiri Buddhists who were important in spreading Buddhist culture up into Central Asia, China, and the Tibetan plateau. Indeed, the Kashmir–Gandhara region is recalled by later Tibetan Buddhist historians as the place of origin for Mahāyāna and later Vajrayāna traditions (see the chapter by Lang in this volume).

Although Buddhism endured in the Vale of Kashmir until around 1300, it slowly declined in competition with Muslim missionaries and a succession of increasingly intolerant rulers. Today, very little of the tradition's material culture survives to suggest its former magnificence or importance in the history of Indic Buddhism.

KATHMANDU VALLEY

By contrast, the far smaller but also richly fertile Kathmandu Valley has remained an oasis of an indigenous Buddhist tradition until the present day, with connections to the Gangetic plain dating back almost 2,000 years. The earliest extant epigraphic records of this valley begin in the fifth century, and stray image finds suggest the Buddhist presence likely began there centuries earlier, given its proximity to Magadha and the Buddhist holy places. (Lumbini is 120 miles distant; Bodh Gaya, 200 miles.)

In 464 CE, the first dated Sanskrit inscriptions indicate donations by householders and kings of a ruling dynasty who referred to themselves by the name Licchavi. Indicating the same pattern of diversity found up until today, records of Hindu temples and Buddhist monasteries are found there, a harmonious relationship that is confirmed by Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang's 玄奘 (596–664) journal covering the period 629–45 CE.

The Licchavi inscriptions and the earliest known art reveal connections between the Nepal Valley and the traditions of monastic art that originated on the Gangetic plain from the early Buddhist centuries, as well as patronage by kings and merchants, and the existence of an order of nuns. Devotees of Śiva, Viṣṇu, and other Hindu gods are also well-represented, especially in royal circles.

The indigenous people of the Kathmandu Valley, the Tibeto-Burman language-speaking Newars, supported the work of resident Buddhist scholars, ritualists, and leaders in the saṃgha who continued to receive, preserve, and adapt Indic Buddhist traditions to local life.

From 900 CE onward, Kathmandu Valley Buddhist pandits copied Sanskrit manuscripts, and Newar Buddhist artisans were in subsequent centuries called upon to build most of the major temples, monasteries, and *stūpa*s (reliquary monuments) across Tibet. Throughout this era, Tibetan Buddhist saints and scholars also traveled to this Valley to build monasteries, erect and restore its great *stūpas*, give teachings, and collect Sanskrit texts, an exchange that, although still little studied, has shaped the development of both Newar and Tibetan Buddhist traditions up to the present day.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

The existence of Buddhism now located primarily in the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh (H.P.) dates back over 2,000 years, as numismatic evidence has established the presence of Buddhism at the turn of the Common Era in the lower hills of the upper Beas River watershed. In the highlands of H.P., Buddhist monasticism is attested at least 1,000 years ago, when monasteries associated with the southern Tibetan kingdom of Guge were built. Legends recount the presence of the "Second Buddha" Padmasambhava and other tantric adepts (*siddha*) in this region; historical sources assert that the translator-missionary Rinchen Zangpo (Rin chen bzang po, 958–1055) built 108 monasteries in the Lahul, Kinnaur, and Spiti valleys, now in modern H.P. A few survive that were built in this era, including the most impressive, Tabo (Ta pho chos skor) and the Lalung Gompa (Lha lung dgon pa).

No records exist regarding the premodern establishment of Buddhism outside of the two important valleys and aside from the few attested sites in the region between them. Undoubtedly, many other peoples in small settlements along the early trade and pilgrimage routes also converted to Buddhism as a result of the work of monks, saints, and local leaders. What is clear from its origins in the rural regions is that the first, or the "ancient," school or Nyingmapa (rNying ma) became established then among the hill peoples, and it is still the most widespread tradition, found in small communities across the Himalayan region until today.

HIMALAYAN BUDDHISM AFTER 1000

After the Second Introduction of Buddhism into Tibet (1000 CE onward), Indic saints and teachers definitively established and strengthened Buddhist traditions across the region. The continuous movement of figures such as Naropa (956–1041), Atiśa (982–1057), Marpa (Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros, 1012–96), and Dharmasvāmin (d. 1234) are documented by their biographers; these accounts depict their travel in small entourages across trails and passes, to visit the many settlements. One gets the impression of many other such travelers – from both the Indic plains and the Tibetan highlands – who underwent the hardships of establishing the Dharma across the Himalayan frontier. These hagiographic stories typically recount the recurring need to subdue local deities and convert local chieftains to the Buddhist path.

As Tibetan polities after 1150 CE were politically and religiously controlled by the new transregional monastic schools, and with the eventual triumph by 1650 of the Gelugpas (dGe lugs pa) led by the Dalai Lamas, many monasteries in central Tibet established additional regional and small branch centers on their own southern Himalayan frontier, in what is today highland India, and Nepal. The country of Bhutan was settled in this period

by members of the Drukpa ('Brug pa) school who sought refuge from Gelugpa persecution in central Tibet.

Long before the borders of modern nations were drawn, an extensive "web of Tibetan monasticism" existed that drew aspiring young monks from all the remote Himalayan regions to larger institutions, some as far as central Tibet, for education and religious training. In fact, the great monasteries there were divided into sub-institutions according to the linguistic areas of the monks' origins. Movement across this expanding Tibetan Buddhist network was not one-way, however: the isolated locations far from the great centers of population at times drew saints seeking spiritual retreat amidst the fierce isolation among the beautiful mountainous terrain; and the missionary ethos of Buddhism, along with the lure of travel (that always existed among some monks from the faith's beginnings) also gave many of these remote outposts, at times, rich infusions of doctrinal teaching and spiritual inspiration.

One early example of this important phenomenon from the late fifteenth century was Tsangnyön Heruka (gTsang smyon he ru ka, 1452–1507), a famous mendicant tantric yogin of the Kargyupa (bKa' brgyud pa) order born in central Tibet. After gaining renown as a young meditation master, he became restless with the life of settled monasticism and periodically undertook long and arduous pilgrimages along the southern Himalayan periphery, visiting the Kathmandu Valley and then other more highland Tibetan Buddhist communities. A spiritual virtuoso renowned for his "holy madness," the saint's life was marked by long periods of solitary meditation, scholarly projects (his biography of Milarepa [Mi la ras pa, 1040/1052–1123/1135] is one of the classics of popular Tibetan literature), and long expeditions spent on pilgrimages to give teachings to those he met. One trip took him to Tingri, Guge, and then Mustang, where his biographer notes the following extraordinary encounter between Tsangnyön and ferocious men (in what is now a town on the north-central northern border of Nepal). They had just won a battle and displayed the mutilated corpses of their enemies when the saint arrived:

> At that time, the people had attached the heads of many of the slain soldiers of Guge to the beams of the city gates. The Lord then took into his hands the brains, crawling with maggots and rotting, that had fallen to the ground and then ate the flesh and brains. Thereupon, he said to the many people gathered: 'If you wish for miraculous realizations (*siddhi*), I shall give them to you.'
>
> (Smith 1969: 14)

Tsangnyön is credited with founding many monasteries in remote places, presumably by more conventional methods, as was the case with other missionary lamas like him who crossed the region.

The premodern era was also a time during which groups migrated over the high passes into the valleys of the Himalayan periphery. Whether it was to seek better lands, follow kin, or the result of groups fleeing times of tumult from Mongol or other incursions across the Tibetan Plateau, legends suggest how people speaking similar languages came to populate the region. It is indeed likely that some nomadic groups on the Tibetan plateau decided to "settle down" and cross the high passes to reach less harsh conditions on ridges and valleys located at lower altitudes south of the great peaks. Scholars of the Sherpas of the Mount Everest region have surmised that this group migrated relatively recently from the eastern Tibetan Plateau; although most highland ethnic groups preserve legends of ancestors

migrating from that region, these cannot be more definitely confirmed or dated beyond what is implied by their group's linguistic affinities to points north.

EARLY MODERN HIMALAYAN BUDDHISMS

By 1600, the Himalayas can be described as a dual religious frontier, the intersection of Tibetan Buddhist civilization from the north interspersed with Indic civilization from the south. Across the region, peoples converted to Islam or came to adopt the religious traditions centered on the main Indic gods and barhmanical rituals. The Kathmandu Valley survived as the last outpost of ancient and medieval Indic Buddhism. In many regions, peoples migrating from the Tibetan Plateau settled into preferred or available ecological niches, and there adapted their religious life centered on Buddhism to their own newfound circumstances. But the region was also by then being populated from the Gangetic plains as well, according to another pattern: Indic migrants, usually bearers of brahmanical or "Hindu" traditions, settled in the alluvial river valleys and introduced intensive rice cultivation and cow-centered subsistence. The intersection of migrants can still be seen in watershed peaks and valleys across the region today: where lower down there are rice cultivators speaking Nepali, an Indo-European language, in the highlands above and to their north are migrants speaking Tibeto-Burman languages, whose reliance on yaks (and yak–cow hybrids) along with high-altitude grains (barley, buckwheat) grown on irrigated fields define a totally different subsistence pattern.

In some regions, however, Tibetan migrants subdued the indigenous inhabitants, coercing them to convert to Buddhism. The Lepcha of Sikkim offer a case study of the ethos of spiritual conquest that prevailed among certain Tibetan elites. In their myths, this group (who refer to themselves as Rong-pa) retains a memory of missionary lamas destroying all evidence of their indigenous culture upon their subjugation and conversion:

> Later the sons of *zo khe bu* and their [central Tibetan noble] families came down to Sikkim with their followers, invaded and conquered the country. At that time Lamaism had nearly reached its peak [there]; [the lamas] collected all the Lepcha manuscripts and books containing historical records, myths, legends, laws, literature and burned them. They took the ashes to the high hills and blew them into the air and built monasteries on the hills from which they scattered the ashes … and forced Lepcha scribes to translate the scriptures and venerate them… .
>
> (Siiger 1967: 28)

Tibeto-Burman peoples were thus affected by both brahmanical and Tibetan migrants, some of whom sought to incorporate them into their larger polities through religious conversion. In the end, and in most Himalayan regions, the rice-growing Indic populations typically came to dominate the political systems of the Himalayas, so that the imperative to "Sanskritize" and adopt brahmanical traditions was faced by the Buddhist ethnic groups in the regional and early modern states.

About this same time, two influences that came from outside Asia arrived to affect the entire Himalayan region: corn and the potato from the "new world." The former staple, indigenous to North America, could be cultivated on dry, non-irrigated mountain terraces in the mid-hills; the potato, indigenous to highland South America and so adapted to thrive in high altitudes, could be grown up to 12,000 ft. Both increased the crop yield for Himalayan peoples and so enabled populations there to add nourishing additions to their diets. As

monasticism depends on a community's surplus wealth, these developments doubtless abetted population growth and enhanced the vitality of Himalayan Buddhism over the past 300 years.

Regardless of the historicity of their migration accounts, there is no doubt that until recently all Tibeto-Burman groups had contacts to their north, both within the corridors of trade and with centers of Tibetan Buddhist civilization. It was these ties that were instrumental in establishing and sustaining Buddhist culture and Himalayan Buddhist ethnic group identity, and it was these ties that had been unraveled, or reoriented, in the later twentieth century. After 1959, this Tibetan Buddhist influence came in the form of refugee spiritual leaders resettling and building new monastic centers outside Chinese-controlled territory.

MODERN BORDERS AND ANOMALOUS CULTURAL SURVIVALS

The survival of some regions where variants of Tibetan Buddhist culture exist up to the present day is largely due to the "accidents" of colonial rule: Ladakh and highland Buddhist areas of the modern states of Himachal Pradesh (Kulu, Manali, Kinnaur) ended up within modern India owing to the British ceding this territory to indigenous rulers; they successfully defended their princely states as part of the British Raj until Indian independence (1947). Sikkim and Bhutan were likewise allowed to remain independent kingdoms by the British only insofar as their foreign policies were consistent with colonial interests, a position continued by independent India after 1947. (Sikkim, however, was annexed back into India within the state of West Bengal in 1975.) In the same way, highland Tibetanized communities in Arunachal Pradesh that were claimed by British India (Tawang and vicinity) also remain as Indian territory today, though these regions, like some of those cited above, are still contested by China.

BUDDHISM IN THE HINDU STATE OF NEPAL

The modern country Nepal was created in 1769 when a hill king from Gurkha united many other rulers from small principalities into a single army that conquered the Kathmandu Valley, and then hill regions from Sikkim to Himachal Pradesh. The Shah dynasty sought to rule in the classical mold of a Hindu monarch, imposing laws based on the treatises on religious duties (*dharma-śāstra*) and supporting only the Nepali language as a national *lingua franca*. Two theological assertions were promulgated: that the king was an incarnation of Viṣṇu and that Śiva in the form of Paśupati ("Lord of Creatures") was the nation's protector, with the primary temple in Kathmandu the object of lavish patronage. (The modern borders were reduced to their current dimensions after a war with the British in 1816.)

So difficult did life under Shah rule become in many hill communities that tens of thousands of Tibeto-Burman peoples and Newars migrated to the eastern "frontier" Himalayan regions, to British-held Sikkim, to Darjeeling and Arunachal Pradesh, to independent Bhutan, and even as far as Burma. Many of these migrants retained kin ties in Nepal. The influence of these displaced Buddhist groups, whose experiences outside Nepal were considerably more "modern" (exposed to British-mediated Protestant Christianity, science, government, law, etc.), was an important factor that influenced their Nepal Buddhist communities in subsequent decades.

Dominated by high-caste *kṣatriyas* and their *brahman* allies, the Ranas usurped power from the Shah kings in 1846, then sought to unify the dozens of ethnic groups autocratically, using Hinduism and Hindu law. Among the many groups that adhered to their own shamanic traditions or Tibetan Buddhism, such state policies were deeply resented, especially when they went hand-in-glove with government policies that allowed Hindu agents of the state to manipulate state laws to confiscate lands through money-lending manipulations and exact new corvee labor from them. State practices fostered conversion to Hinduism and laws punished groups that refused to give up or radically curb their non-Hindu religious practices. (Eating yak meat, for example, was viewed as an act of "cow killing.") Tamangs, the largest Tibeto-Burman group in Nepal, whose mid-montane settlements are closest to the Kathmandu Valley, suffered the most from Rana despotism in the form of losing land ownership and being compelled to do forced labor.

The history of the much smaller and more remote ethnic group, the Thakalis of the upper Kali Gandaki River, provides another case study of Tibeto-Burman Buddhist response. Since the north–south trade route in their territory garnered much wealth for them, they readily adapted to the Hindu state by almost completely suppressing their Buddhist identity: they had their literati compose new historical accounts of their ancient Hindu origins, celebrated Hindu festivals and dropped Buddhist ritualism, and adopted brahmanical life-cycle rituals (Fisher 2001). Other Tibeto-Burman groups did not go this far, but all conformed in some ways to the norms of the Shah-Rana rulers, trying to manage the group's impression as being orthoprax in key Hindu observances when under scrutiny by the Hindu state.

By 1900, Nepal existed as one of the most isolated nations on earth, ruled by the staunchly Hindu Rana family. Supported by the British colonial government to the south – who employed thousands of Nepali men as mercenaries and who wanted Nepal to remain as a buffer to Russian entry into Tibet – the Ranas complied by a strict policy of isolation, relying on the malarial foothills to the south, the high Himalayan massif to the north, and a prohibition against entry by foreigners.

In 1950, when the Ranas were expelled and the Shah kings reassumed power amidst a multi-party democracy, Nepal's coercive Hindu identity and practices continued. Every government center in every district of Nepal established a small temple to Paśupati, and each also had a site for Durgā worship; officials performed rituals daily and during the fall Dasarā festival that sacrificed animals to protect the nation.

After ten years of multiparty democracy, King Mahendra (1920–72) outlawed political parties and assumed direct rule in a new era of "Panchayat Raj" (1960–90). The same domestic policies regarding culture and religion continued, while the state acted out its identity as "the world's only Hindu nation" in the eyes of Hindu partisans and nationalists. High-caste Hindus were favored in government jobs, the national language Nepali was the exclusive medium of education, and Hindu festivals were grandly celebrated as national holidays. All of these practices fostered resentments that eventually led to the revolution of 1991, an uprising that ended the Panchayat government and ushered in a new era of ethnic politics in which Tibeto-Burman groups across the nation rallied to oppose Hindu and brahman cultural hegemony. Eventually this movement added to the political forces that displaced Nepal's ruling dynasty.

MODERN TIBETAN MONASTICISM ACROSS
NEPAL'S HIGHLANDS

Until 1959, Nepal's Tibetan or Tibeto-Burman connections to the Tibetan plateau Buddhist institutions were still vital, from Humla in far western Nepal, as well as (from west to east) in Dolpo, Lo-Mustang, Nyeshang, Nupri, Manang, Langtang, Helambu, Solu-Khumbu, and Walung. Local boys interested in training to become ordained monks would do what their ancestors had done for centuries: travel to central Tibet and return to maintain local institutions that typically sheltered, at most, a few resident monks whose main occupation was local ritual service. Everything changed with the exodus of the Dalai Lama to India, and since 1960 the network has been partially realigned to refugee institutions in Dharamsala, Sikkim, and Kathmandu.

Also affected was the "second tier" of connection between central Tibet and the Tibeto-Burman peoples (whose main settlements are typically lower than 10,000 ft.): Magars, Gurungs, Thakalis, Manangis, Tamangs, Sherpas, and Lepchas. Most of the Buddhist ritualists among them follow the Nyingmapa school and the people rely on householder *lamas* to perform their rituals. To train for this service, young Tibeto-Burman men typically live for several years as apprentices with elder householder lamas or in the regional highland monasteries. (Before 1959, some of these might have trained in Tibet.) Most return to their villages to marry and maintain shrines established as their family's own property. Thus, most "Buddhist monasteries" among Tibeto-Burman peoples today are family shrine-residences and sons usually continue to follow their fathers as the local Buddhist ritualists. In recent years, the strength of Buddhist identity held together by these institutions among the Nepalese Tibeto-Burman groups was the basis of post-1990 ethnic nationalism, or *janjati* activism, directed against the high castes that dominated in the failed Hindu state. In 2007–8, a popular uprising deposed the Hindu king and reconstituted Nepal as a secular republic.

The growing presence of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and teachers in the Kathmandu Valley also altered the religious landscape of the Tibeto-Burman groups. With the first *gompa*s (*dgon pa*, monasteries) founded in the later Malla era (post-1600), Tibetan monks became an integral if small part of the Kathmandu Valley landscape, with most centered on the great *stūpas* of Bauddha and Svayambhū. Throughout the twentieth century, each of the main Tibetan sects also established branch monasteries with major resident scholars and spiritual teachers in Nepal.

Abetting this centralizing Tibetan trend in the Valley after 1990 was the Maoist uprising in Nepal (1995–2006). Growing rural violence and intimidation drove many of the affluent Tibeto-Burman Buddhists from across the mid-hills to leave their towns to resettle in Kathmandu. This influx has fueled a spate of new residential building as well as monastery construction, representing this elite's tradition of investment in grand merit-making. Many immense Tibetan monasteries have been built across the breadth of the Valley that now attract refugee monks and nuns from the Tibetan Plateau, the refugee diaspora, as well as a growing number of aspiring monastics from the Tibeto-Burman peoples. To be ordained and study with great Tibetan lamas today, one need not walk overland to central Tibet, but take a one- or two-day bus trip to the nation's capital.

The Kathmandu Valley is now one of the most important centers of Tibetan Buddhism in the world for several reasons. First, in addition to the Tibeto-Burman influx, one of the largest concentrations of Tibetan refugees in the world has settled there. Given the wealth generated by carpet-weaving enterprises, the tourist industry, and foreign remittances, some

of this surplus has been dedicated to providing patronage to dozens of new monasteries. Second, as Tibetan Buddhism has become increasingly attractive to Westerners, a number of prominent Tibetan lamas oriented to them and – funded by their donations – have established "Dharma centers" at Bauddha and other places that in most ways resemble traditional monasteries. Here one can find textual study and meditation being pursued by both ethnic Tibetans and westerners clad in red robes.

EXAMPLES OF HIGHLAND BUDDHISMS IN NEPAL AND INDIA

Among Himalayan peoples, the most familiar term used for a Buddhist ritualist is *lama* (*bla ma*), a Tibetan word usually meaning "guru," but one that has also become a family surname of individuals with a history of serving as Buddhist ritualists. The term can designate a celibate monk as well as a married priest.

The material culture of Buddhism marks the Himalayan landscape with meritorious devotional items and sacred objects imparting protection. *Stūpa*s are found in and around the villages; settlements are decorated with prayer-walls at village entranceways (most inscribed with the Avalokiteśvara mantra "*Oṃ Maṇi Padme Hūṃ*") and fluttering prayer-flags with this or protective mantras fly above the houses.

Most villages have one or two temple-shrines. Usually small, these typically contain images or paintings of Guru Rimpoche (Padmasambhava), the founding saint of the prevalent Nyingmapa school; the Buddha Śākyamuni; and Chenrizi (sPyan ras gzigs), celestial bodhisattva known in Sanskrit as Avalokiteśvara. Each temple usually houses texts, ritual paraphernalia, and a variety of icons or paintings; the yearly festival that commemorates the monastery's founding is typically one of the major events of the village ritual year.

The Buddhist saṃgha in these communities is almost never a celibate elite, but is composed of householders, usually related, as this vocation is often inherited from one's own father or patrilineage. The Tamang of the central Himalayas are representative in the composition of a Tibeto-Burman Saṃgha. In David Holmberg's summary,

> Tamang lamas are married householders who farm like their kinsfolk, although they avoid plowing. During ritual, they don red robes, chant texts, display scroll paintings, and employ ritual implements. At these times villagers address them by the honorific *sangkye*, the word for "Buddha".
>
> (1984: 697)

The most common Tibeto-Burman Buddhist rituals (*ghyawa*) are those concerned with merit-making and death, in which the lamas chant and meritorious gifts are made to insure a positive future birth. The essential Buddhist death rite among the Tamang is called *ghyewa* or *gral* (lit. "rescue"), which includes the last rites and a memorial death feast afterwards. When someone dies, lamas are invited to sit with the body to chant texts with drum and cymbal accompaniment or else the *bla* or life force will not be pacified. They also supervise the last rites, usually cremation, to send off the dead successfully to a favorable rebirth.

A traditional spiritual practice for householders that has grown in popularity across Himalayan Buddhist societies is that of *nyungne*, a fasting and Mahāyāna meditation rite dedicated to celestial bodhisattva Chenrezi. It consists of two days of practice. On the first

day, each participant takes vows to observe the rules and abide by the eight moral precepts; each can eat only one vegetarian meal, with water the only drink. The second day entails a complete fast with no meals or liquids at all; each participant must also remain silent until the end. The purpose of the rite is to become more aware of suffering and to deepen the individual's spiritual connection to this bodhisattva, the most popular in Tibetan (and Asian) Mahāyāna traditions.

BUDDHISM, SHAMANISM, AND THE HIMALAYAN "RELIGIOUS FIELD"

While adhering to Buddhism in their own way, Himalayan Buddhists all follow other traditions as well: it is important to think of a larger "religious field" that includes ceremonies performed by other ritual specialists that are directed to local and clan deities. These often mesh with local Buddhist traditions, but at times they can clash with Buddhist norms. On the village level, every ethnic group across the region venerates its lineage ancestors as living gods, whose wrath or protection can affect the living. Accordingly, they should be worshiped at regular intervals, and especially during times of trouble.

The Himalayan landscape also contains a welter of spirits inhabiting local mountains, springs, rocks, caves, trees, and rivers. Some deities when pleased bring local blessings like the seasonal rains and the land's fertility; others in the local pantheon can cause disasters (e.g. hail storms) and illness through taking possession of humans. In both cases – for venerating its ancestors and worshiping local deities – Himalayan Buddhists call on shamans or spirit mediums. Across the Himalayan region, these specialists perform dramatic all-night séances to contact the gods. By drumming and singing, they enter trance; in this state, they converse with and hear the divinities express their wishes, and then work to satisfy their demands (with songs, sacrifices, mantras) so they can cure the sick and insure community well-being.

Himalayan shaman traditions vary across the region (and even within the same group); crossing over from watershed to watershed moving west to east, the religious life of the people shifts as regularly as changes in dialect. The Tamang of central Nepal are typical in their reliance on several different religious specialists: they have a tradition of *lambu* exorcists who limit their service to exorcising evil spirits; and their *bombo* or shamans intervene in a variety of ways to contact the gods for protection, healing, or to secure more general blessings.

In most times and places, this coexistence of lamas and spirit mediums represents an amiable division of labor; but at other times and places, this is not always the case. Stan Mumford's study (1989) of Buddhists in Manang, in west-central Nepal, explored a conflict that divided Buddhists in one village when newly arrived Tibetan Buddhist lamas were opposed to the annual deer sacrifice. For centuries, this had been done to appease the local mountain deity. The shamanic loyalists argued that without this deity's blessing, their tenuous farming life would be endangered; the lamas insisted that blood sacrifice inevitably involved generating bad karma for individuals and locality and that this sacrifice was what endangered the community. They performed a "sacrifice" of a dough deer effigy; but the loyalists find this inadequate, so life has gone on with both traditions continuing.

The populations in the Lo-Mantang region proximate to the Dhaulagiri Himalaya have also fostered this coexistence of blood sacrifice traditions with Buddhism. In his study of the village of Te, Charles Ramble (2007) has shown that while the people are nominally Buddhist, and support Buddhist tantric priests to perform a variety of rituals, they are also

devotees of a local religion that involves blood sacrifices to wild, unassimilated local gods and goddesses. Here, both Buddhism and the cults of local gods have been subordinated to the pragmatic demands of village community survival.

Regarding this Himalayan confluence of Buddhism and shamanism, some scholars have argued that it is the region's strong shamanic traditions that led to Tibetan Buddhism's adapting itself to them, and so becoming unique in the Buddhist world. Geoffrey Samuel (1993) has seen this juxtaposition as the basis of understanding Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhism as best characterized as "civilized shamanism."

Among many Tibeto-Burman groups, this multi-specialist religious life is seen in the death rituals that involve all of the different practitioners, not just Buddhist lamas. Among the Gurungs of Nepal (and like the Tamangs, above) there are exorcists (*pucu*) who conduct rituals to drive off demons, shamans (*khilbri*) who reassure the now-disembodied soul, and then lamas who garner merit and guide the deceased to a favorable next rebirth. It is the same among the Lepchas of Sikkim, where the central religious roles in householder life are occupied by the *bóngthing*, who presides at recurring religious ceremonies and may be called upon to heal acute illness; and the *mun*, a healer who exorcises demons.

Overall, it is Buddhist doctrine and worldview that is nonetheless acknowledged as the dominant ideology across the Himalayan frontier (Clarke 1983; 1990). Just as the buddhas and bodhisattvas reign supreme over lesser gods and local spirits, karma provides the central moral principle that functions as natural law. Yet living in the high Himalayas requires vigilance and community action, as illustrated by the Sherpa understanding of the human-divine nexus:

> The world is full of negative forces taking the form of demons and other nasty creatures. The gods are protective of people, but this protection does not come automatically; it must be petitioned and renewed through ritual. Thus the essential act of ritual practice is to make offerings to the gods, to flatter them to some extent, and to request that they continue their protection of humanity against the evil forces of the world.
>
> (Ortner 1989: 43)

"BUDDHISM UPGRADED": SHERPAS AND GURUNGS

The most studied highland Buddhist group in the Himalayas is the Sherpas, who early in the modern era achieved unparalleled prosperity by the eighteenth century through their involvement in Indo-Tibetan trade; their wealthy families began to invest in Buddhist traditional learning and practices. In 1850 they funded several Sherpa village priests to travel to Tibet. This group came to study with the well-known lama scholar Choki Wangchuk (Chos kyi dbang phyug, 1775–1837), who instructed them in ritual and meditation cycles, some of which are still popular throughout the villages of Solu-Khumbu, the Sherpa homeland in proximity to Mt. Everest. As Matthew Kapstein (2012) has noted, "The liturgies for these rites are often profound and beautiful, as their titles suggest, e.g., 'The Union of All that is Precious,' 'The Spontaneous Freedom of an Enlightened Intention,' 'The Celestial Doctrine of the Land of Bliss'."

Sherpas also were also first to enter the trekking industry in Nepal, and this plus support from foreign donors counteracted the loss of their trading enterprises north into Tibet after the border was closed in 1959. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, those prospering from

trekking and mountaineering were not as interested in Buddhist patronage and instead oriented themselves toward Western culture. Many settled in the Kathmandu Valley and the Buddhist material culture of the highland Sherpa settlements was neglected. Since 1990, however, Sherpa patrons have resumed their interest in maintaining their homeland Buddhist institutions, and they now support celibate monastics both there and in new monasteries built in the Kathmandu Valley.

There are now two types of Sherpa monastery. Private monasteries, the property of a senior member of a clan, are located in homes and under the control of lineage priests, *gyudpi*; all relatives gather in these precincts when rituals are performed. The public monasteries, notably Chiwong and Tengboche, were built beginning in 1930 and are for everyone in the community. They preserve a large collection of texts copied in Tibet and woodblocks for printing many manuscripts, these the work of artisans who learned to carve woodblocks for printing that are said to rival those produced elsewhere in Tibet. Supported by wealthy Sherpa patrons, some Sherpa lamas have entered the world of global Tibetan Buddhist monasticism and attained an international following.

The Gurungs of central Nepal (pop. 534,000), though less well known than Sherpas (pop. 150,000), have also benefited from new connections in the modern era. Their employment in British and Indian "Gurkha" military regiments, the development of tourism in their home region, and international migration have led to new wealth and innovations in their practice of Buddhism. Southern Gurungs have invested in having their own indigenous scholars recover from oral recensions a history text called the *Tamu Pye*. Drawing on sections extracted from recent Nepali histories, it documents the uniqueness of their group's history. This text asserts the great antiquity of their adherence to Buddhism, dating its origins back to the age of previous buddhas, who in fact were also Gurung ancestors (Bechert 2003: 10). As with other Tibeto-Burman groups, their new compositions claim that their group once possessed its own calendar as well as Gurung works of literature in their own language, written in their own script; and there are stories in the *Tamu Pye* that maintain that these landmarks of high culture were destroyed by Newar king Jaya Sthiti Malla (r. 1382–95) "at the instigation of the Hindu sage Shankara" (Bechert 2003: 11). While accounts of this sort contain few events that can be authenticated historically, they indicate how eagerly their leaders and community wish to assert the validity of their traditions and their pride in their own unique Buddhist identity.

The thousands of Gurungs who migrated out of Nepal to the eastern Himalayas and abroad have also sought to revive the vitality of Gurung Buddhism. Like Sherpas, many Gurung families encourage a son or a daughter to get initiated into the monastery community as a monk or a nun.

MODERN NEWAR BUDDHISM

By 1500, the Newar saṃgha developed a highly ritualized Buddhist culture among the indigenous inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley. Newars followed exoteric Indic Mahāyāna Buddhism; it was Vajrayāna Buddhism and tantric initiation that assumed the highest position in local understanding, though only a few actually practiced the esoteric traditions. Newar monastic architecture still reflects this development: in the large courtyards that define the monastic space, the shrines facing the entrance have on the ground floor an image of Śākyamuni or Avalokiteśvara; but on the first floor above is the *āgama*, a shrine with a Vajrayāna deity, with access limited to those with a tantric initiation.

As Hindu shrines and law were in the ascendancy from the late Malla period right through the twentieth century, Newar Buddhism adapted. Although the when and why of this development remain unknown, there was a literal domestication of Saṃgha as former celibate Newar monks became married householders. These Newar "householder monks" called themselves *Bare* (from the Sanskrit term *vande* or *vandanâ*, an ancient Indic term of respect for monks), adopted the names *śākyabhikṣu* and *vajrācārya*, and began to function as endogamous castes. This meant that one had to be born into this saṃgha and, with a few exceptions, everyone else was denied ordination. (This left only the Tibetan Saṃghas in the Kathmandu Valley where ordination into celibate monastic Mahāyāna life was possible for Newars wishing to become monks.)

The masters in the Newar saṃgha adapted their local ritual traditions to conform to the state's caste laws and thereby preserve the social and legal standing of the Buddhist community, including its once-extensive monastic land holdings. Many Newar monasteries today, especially in Patan, still bear the name of their founding patrons, some dating back to the early Malla period. Local Buddhist literati, like Hindu pandits, were especially active in manuscript copying; Buddhist monastic libraries in the Kathmandu Valley in the modern era became known worldwide as the greatest repository of the Sanskrit texts written for and utilized in medieval Hinduism and Buddhism.

Unlike the monastic institutions of Tibet that fostered in-depth philosophical inquiry and vast commentarial writings, Newar monks have produced few original contributions to Buddhist scholarship. The Newar saṃgha's special focus is the performance of rituals drawing upon deities and powers of the Mahāyāna-Vajrayāna Buddhist tradition. Like married Tibetan monks of the Nyingmapa order, the *vajrācārya* priests serve the community's ritual needs, with some specializing in textual study, medicine, astrology, and meditation. The married monks' ritual services are vast, including Buddhist versions of Hindu life-cycle rites (*saṃskāra*), fire rites (*homa*), daily temple rituals (*nitya pūjā*), mantra chanting protection rites, merit-producing donation rites, *stūpa* rituals, image processions and "chariot festivals" (*ratha jātra*), and tantric initiations (*abhiṣekha*). Many very ancient practices continue up until today. To cite one example: in Kathmandu's Itum Bāhā, one can still see the ritual of marking time by a monk rapping on a wooden gong, a monastic custom begun over 2,000 years ago in ancient India. To cite another, "the cult of the Mahāyāna book" also endures at yearly rites when devotees make offerings to special Perfection of Wisdom (*Prajñāpāramitā*) texts. And processions of Buddha images like those mentioned by the Chinese pilgrims in the fifth–seventh centuries are still found on the streets of the major cities.

Still, the Buddhist traditions that developed in these unusual ways over 500 years ago have faced a host of challenges since 1800. Shah discrimination against Buddhists and changes in land tenure laws under their rule have undermined the land tenancy system and many of the endowments that had grown to materially underwrite the Newar Buddhist tradition. Today, of the 300 monasteries still extant, roughly 10 percent of these have all but disappeared and more than 60 percent are in perilous structural condition. Newar monasteries are still controlled by the senior-most male members of their individual saṃghas, a fact that has made significant reforms or innovations within the local saṃgha difficult. Despite the decline of the monasteries as buildings and institutions, much of Buddhist material culture is still preserved in the elaborate monastic architecture, thousands of archived texts, and the wealth of cultural observances. A small circle of tantric Buddhist practitioners still exists as well.

Newar Buddhism also had a regional diaspora. One of the most important changes that Shah rule brought to the middle hill regions of the country was an expansion of trade, and this was largely in the hands of Newars who migrated to the new trade towns. The thousands who left the Valley to seek these new opportunities also took their culture, prominently Buddhism. Thus, in towns such as (from east to west) Daran, Dhankuta, Chainpur, Bhojpur, Dolakha, Trisuli, Bandipur, Pokhara, Tansen, Ridi, and Baglung, Newar Buddhists built monasteries as branch institutions of those in their home cities; in most places, these continue to be active today.

Despite the control of the Newar saṃgha by caste and age seniority systems, there have been revitalization institutions that have arisen in recent years. Across the Kathmandu Valley, Buddhist householders have established *Jñānamalla Bhajans* to sing newly written and composed Buddhist songs performed in the style of Hindu *bhakti* (devotional) groups: the leader plays the harmonium, with accompaniment by a tabla, cymbals, and chorus. These groups have also undertaken service projects for their local traditions, including Buddhist festival participation.

In Kathmandu, teachers Badri Bajracarya and Naresh Bajracarya have started to ordain Newar males wishing to enter the saṃgha, regardless of caste, offering in addition training in Sanskrit, literature, philosophy, and ritual practice. In Patan, the Lotus Research Center led by Min Bahadur Shakya sought to bring together Newar and Tibetan traditions, and it also published in modern Newari the great works of Sanskrit Mahāyāna Buddhism. Both have been supported by international Buddhist organizations from Taiwan, South Korea, or Japan.

MODERN THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM IN THE HIMALAYAS

Since the 1920s, Newars disenchanted with their ritually rich, but explanation-poor, Mahāyāna tradition have supported the establishment of Theravāda Buddhist reform institutions in the Kathmandu Valley. Inspired by teachers from Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, and India, Newars "entered the robes," and some founded institutions in the large cities that are dedicated to the revival of Buddhism based upon Theravāda doctrine, popular preaching, and lay meditation.

Beginning with the Anandakuti monastery at Svayambhū for monks and the Dharmakirti monastery for "nuns" in central Kathmandu, Newars have been ordained and renounced the householder life to live in these institutions. (Technically, the ancient order of nuns, the *Bhikkhunī* Saṃgha, has died out in the Theravāda countries; the term "*anāgārikā*" is used locally, although the women conform to most Monastic Discipline (*Vinaya*) rules, including vows of celibacy.)

The Theravādin institutions have been instrumental in promoting the modernist "Protestant Buddhism" originating in colonial Sri Lanka: they have subtly critiqued Newar and Tibetan Mahāyāna beliefs and practices, while seeking to revive the faith by promoting textual study and translations of Pāli texts into Newari. In the last twenty years, prominent monks have acquired foreign Theravāda patrons who have funded new monasteries being built in the Valley in the Burmese or Thai styles. The Theravādins have laid the foundations for branches of *vipassanā* (insight) meditation centers affiliated with Satya Narayan Goenka (1924–2013), a lay teacher from India. Since the early 1980s, these have gained considerable popularity, but primarily only among middle-class Newars.

RECENT TRENDS IN HIMALAYAN BUDDHISMS

Despite decades of funding by international donors, there has been a total failure to control the rising population in the region. As a result, there is not enough arable land to produce the food needed to feed everyone. Responding to this reality, many young people now engage in a form of circular migration, staying away most of the year to pursue cash income jobs in Kathmandu, India, the Gulf states, or in the West. Many villages today across the Buddhist mid-hills and highlands are populated for most of the year only by new mothers, elders, and their grandchildren. This is changing the nature of rural life across the region, but has also opened new possibilities for the Tibeto-Burmese people, who now can earn more money abroad than their ancestors could imagine. Indeed, a formidable new influence is the remittances being sent home from Himalayan Buddhists working abroad; some of this wealth is being used to fund rituals and for the patronage of temples back in the home region.

Since 1959, the Nepalese government, responding to considerable developmental aid from the Chinese government, has refused to admit the exiled Dalai Lama. In recent years, subject to additional pressure, it has turned back refugees at the border and restricted granting asylum to refugees who make it to the capital. The entire region's status quo of Tibetan refugee haven, and diaspora, may soon be overturned.

Today, Buddhists from the Tibetan and Tibeto-Burman groups originating across the Himalayan region are now found existing among Newar and Theravāda adherents amidst the Kathmandu Valley's remarkable religious pluralism. This valley is also famous as a major center for Hinduism in the modern world, with its medieval temples as well as centers devoted to global gurus such as Sai Baba (1926–2011) and Rajneesh (Chandra Mohan Jain, 1931–1990), who enjoy considerable support. There are also neo-Hindu groups such as the Brahma Kumaris who also have centers in the capital. Christian missionaries are now free to proselytize, and churches have spread from the valley to hundreds of small villages. In addition, there are Sikh temples and Muslim mosques built by their resident trader communities; if one seeks them out, one can find centers for the Baha'i, and a half-dozen Japanese "new religions." Indeed, Nepal's capital today is one of the most diverse religious locations in the world.

Himalayan Buddhists have absorbed a diversity of outside influences from their earliest history; in the future, Buddhism's adherents will doubtless continue to shape their own lives with reference to both the venerable traditions of their ancestors and new ideas that will make their way into their mountain vistas.

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TIME TRAVEL IN TIBET
Tantra, Terma, and Tulku

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Mark Stevenson

INTRODUCTION

The central soteriological vision of Buddhism in Tibet is the same as that in Buddhism elsewhere: it is founded upon the four noble truths that describe cyclic existence (*'khor ba*, "turning, going around"; Skt. *saṃsāra*, "wandering") as pervaded by suffering (*sdug bsngal*), and it possesses instructions on the practices needed for the achievement of peace. Nevertheless, as elsewhere, the Buddhist traditions of Tibet have been marked by developments that in some cases they shared with other Mahāyāna traditions, and others that can be identified as being specifically Tibetan.[1] The development of specifically Tibetan theories (*lta ba*), practices (*sgrub thabs*), and institutions (*chos lugs*, *gzhung lugs*, *'gro lugs*) is, of course, what most stands out when we think of phrases like "Tibetan Buddhism" or even "Buddhism in Tibet."

HISTORY AND INSTITUTIONS

Buddhism's becoming "Tibetan" was a historical process, and the features that may be identified as being specific to (if not typical of) Buddhism in Tibet are marked by the history of the tradition's arrival and its subsequent development within Tibetan history. This much goes without saying. Nevertheless, the phenomena I explore in this chapter are instances of remarkable ways in which the history of Buddhism and its development in Tibet faced particular problems relating to time and history. Looking into those problems should have something to tell us about religion in Tibet, now, in the past, and in the future ("the three times," *dus gsum*), as well as about some more general problems in the study of religion. It is an "institutions" approach, rather than a doctrinal one, although it should become clear that the two are related in the Tibetan case.

There are a number of interesting things Tibetans have done with time over the ages, the three most obvious being, in rough chronological order: (1) canonical revelations[2] known as *tantras* (Tib. *brgyud*, continuum); (2) noncanonical revelations hidden in the landscape during Tibet's early empire and discovered at a later date, or *termas* (*gter ma*, treasures); and (3) *tulkus* (*sprul sku*, "apparitional embodiments"), lines of enlightened teachers who continue to return and teach in human form for centuries. Focusing on *tantra*, *terma*, and

tulku, three more or less well-known institutions that continue to generate curiosity about Buddhism in Tibet, is one way of accomplishing an overview of how Tibetan religion has been transmitted, how it has been renewed, and how it has been practiced over the centuries. It will also provide insights into some of the historical processes underlying Buddhism's development in Tibet and how well placed it is to continue in the immediate future. Each of the three, *tantra*, *terma*, and *tulku*, may be understood as temporal technologies that enabled Buddhism in Tibet to flourish, but I will also argue that they pose a number of interesting problems for Tibetan religion in our own time, and so I will end by asking if Tibetan religion is about to face a crisis, what that question tells us about religion in general, and also what it says about our own time (in the sense of both this "twenty-first century" and our own construction of time including our relationship to it).

I will not offer a specialized analysis of the three institutions, drawing out instead the different approaches to time each development appears to have involved to consider how each approach was – as a strategy of representation – meaningful in its own time of introduction or development, with perhaps less attention to how the time of its meaningfulness has been (and is or isn't being) extended.[3] Time in Buddhism, or any religious tradition, is not a simple matter (or at least it isn't when scholars and mystics get hold of it: Eliade 1969; Wayman 1969; Tachikawa 1998), and neither is Buddhism's development in Tibet, but I hope the simplifications I enforce here will at least succeed in outlining what is an important challenge for Tibetans and Tibetan religion as they come to terms with a period of deep crisis and sweeping change (Sperling 2001: 327). If Tibetan cultural history has performed some miraculous tricks with time from time to time, now may also be another of those times.

TIME IN BUDDHISM

In addressing the question of time in this essay I am interested in time in relation to soteriology and what I will call "life-time," rather than to questions of what time is made up of and whether or not it exists, and if it does exist, in what way it is real (questions Buddhist thinkers entertained in many places and times). The discussion is going to get complicated enough without going too far into cosmology, and there are considerable differences around these questions within Buddhist tradition, so I have sidestepped such an approach in preference for an uncomplicated heuristic. It is perhaps easiest and quickest to begin with a comparison. Buddhism takes a very different stance from Christianity, for example, in its general orientation to time, life, and eternity. Indeed, they head in opposite directions. Christianity in the main sees each person as beginning at one point in time (when they are born) and ideally entering eternal life when they depart this world. The arrow of life-time begins at a single point and ideally goes forward forever, the proper destiny for a person being eternal life.

In the Buddhist traditions life has already been eternal. Neither time nor the chain of lives has a beginning, and the problem is how to bring cyclic existence to an end. While there are great eons that are described as being to some extent cyclical, with universes and gods coming into and going out of existence, the mind-stream of individuals is beginningless, proceeding through an infinite number of lives and life-forms. It is the beginningless series of lives that is to be brought to an end at the achievement of nirvana (*mya ngan las 'das*, the transcendence of sorrow), the cessation of the causal chain that involves an individual in cyclic existence. While there are debates in the tradition relating to the nature of karma and

continuity (Sharma 1993), or the unchanging and unborn nature of the real (Prasad 1988), individuals turn through cyclic existence life after life; this is the general backdrop to the Indian worldview within which the Buddha's four noble truths were developed, and the Buddha's teaching makes little sense outside it.[4] Indeed, the requirement in the *Delineation of Monastic Discipline* (*'Dul ba lung rnam 'byed*; Skt. *Vinaya-vibhaṅga*) that the wheel of life (*srid pa'i khor lo*; Skt. *bhava-cakra*) be displayed in the vestibule to a temple (*gtsug lha khang; Skt. vīhāra*) is precisely "for the purpose of meditation upon the four noble truths" (Rechung 1989: 39). Surrounded by impermanence – in the figure of death – those who fail to extinguish the cycle of ego-maintaining reactive emotions (desire, aversion, ignorance) continue endlessly to spin through the wheel as hell-beings, ghosts and animals, barely ever rising to human or godly existence, rapidly descending again if they should fail to use a superior birth to attend to the task of awakening.[5]

Ongoing study of the Tibetan manuscripts from the Dunhuang cave temples (a busy transcultural conduit of Buddhism north of Tibet,[6] seventh to tenth centuries for Tibetan manuscripts) reveals that the conception of time held by the Tibetan imperial court and elite prior to the introduction of Buddhism was considerably different from both patterns described above, consisting of four great eras beginning with a happy time of humans and descending through three subsequent eras of degeneration when a new cycle of four eras was initiated through a revival of the cult honoring the king's sacredness or divinity.[7] There appear to have been two options for an individual at death: (1) "the country of miseries" and suffering; and (2) "the country of joy and happiness" (Imaeda 2007: 106; 2010: 153).

It is difficult to accept characterizations of the idea of rebirth in Buddhism as "life after death" wishful thinking. Depending on how life works out for an individual, with its expanded prospects for lower births and the rarity of precious human rebirth, the Buddhist view of things has the potential to make death more traumatic … not least if an individual has become what the nineteenth century yogin Shabkar (1781–1851) called a "slave to this life" (Ricard et al. 1994: 280). Given the attention to death rites found in the Dunhuang "library," and particularly the proliferation of rites for parents, this was no small matter for Tibetans involved in the early period of Buddhist translation. It is likely that the tradition of representing the wheel of life entered Tibet as part of the Fundamental Everything Exists School's (Skt. Mūlasarvāstivāda) monastic code and served as a rapid introduction to Buddhist cosmology and soteriology (and it has been the Tibetan *thangkas* [*thang ka*, scroll paintings] and murals that have made the image more widely known to the non-Buddhist world).

TANTRIC TIMELINES

Buddhism came to Tibet quite late, around about a thousand years after the Buddha's passing.[8] Ancient legend suggests evidence of earlier piecemeal contact, but there is no suggestion of any significant foothold in Tibetan culture until the reign of Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po, ca. 617–49/650), with a concerted translation program under way by the time of the reign of Tri Songdetsen (Khri Srong lde btsan, 755/756–97). While China and Central Asia were initially important sources for much of the translation effort, there was at the same time a degree of prestige and authority given to Indian sources and teachers. Traditions concerning doctrinal debates at Samyé (Tibet's first monastery, founded late eighth century) suggest the existence of a growing desire to avoid China in the context of Central Asian power machinations.[9] India, separated by the high Himalaya, allowed more selective cultural contact,

and Buddhism's origins in India were becoming emblematic of authenticity and textual authority, an impression that was only assisted by the rise of the Buddhist Pāla empire (750–1174) and its monastic-cum-tantric universities in northeastern India.

The late arrival of Buddhism in Tibet and the fact that it came at a time of dynamic religious activity in northern India and Central Asia has left modern historians of religion with a plethora of questions regarding the periodization of texts and doctrines, but it is unlikely that Tibetan converts in the eighth century saw things that way. Not only had there been a flourishing array of doctrinal, cosmological, and ritual innovations since the passing of the Buddha – from which an entire new approach to Buddhist soteriology, the Mahāyāna, had developed – the entry of Buddhism into Tibet coincided with the appearance of the first self-conscious tantric Buddhist traditions in the Indian subcontinent in the mid- to late-seventh century (Davidson 2002: 24; Gray 2009: 2; Weinberger 2010: 138).[10] The Mahāyāna and the tantric traditions the Tibetans would come to call the Adamantine Vehicle (Skt. Vajrayāna) or the Vehicle of Mantras (Skt. Mantrayāna) entered Tibet at the same time, a situation exemplified in the image that has been passed down of the co-presence and codependence of the logician abbot Śāntarakṣita (ca. 725–788) and the tantric magician Padmasambhava at the court of the Tibetan emperor Tri Songdetsen.

From approximately the first century, those subscribing to Mahāyāna approaches to Buddhism had been developing a new model of sainthood that included a commitment to strive within the wheel of life working for the liberation of all sentient beings for countless lifetimes as a bodhisattva (Skt. "an agent of awakening"), and as they were developing this new soteriological model they were at the same time aligning their religious vision with abstract philosophical treatises on topics such as "emptiness" and yogic insight. There were diverse communities subscribing to this new mode of Buddhist thought, all busy composing new scriptures, new discourses (Skt. *sūtra*) of the Buddha, and new ritual practices and art that suited the gradually emerging "larger" (Skt. *mahā*) view of the Buddhist project (Williams 2009: 3). When we consider that it took around 350 years before the canons of early Buddhism were written down, this addition to the record of the Buddha's teaching does not look at all out of place.[11] Nevertheless, it did begin to institute a decline in the importance of the historical Buddha over and against increasingly remote and abstract sources of inspiration: "Mahāyāna Buddhists increasingly came to disembed their teachings from [the] spatial and temporal context [of the historical Buddha], maintaining instead a stance of ultimacy by insisting on their [teaching's] timeless non-locality" (Gray 2005: 422).

The tantric teachings that were entering Tibet in the period of Tibetan empire were part of a movement that broke even further away from orthodox notions of authenticity or historical purity, yet, while we have seen that there were polemical disputes and opposition even early on (Weinberger 2010: 146), there does not appear to have been a lot of concern in this period over the historicity or otherwise of the scriptures being imported from India and Central Asia. Even if these were among concerns raised by opponents of Buddhism at the imperial court – and even opponents who refuse contact with a system of thought still tend to pick up on such things – it is unlikely that any record of them has survived. Buddhism arrived (and was imported) with an impressive array of cultural apparatus (writing, literature, history, law, art, ritual complexity etc.) that gave an already sophisticated Tibetan elite access to the latest cultural trends in their part of the world.

And, indeed, the Tibetan world was quickly changed forever. What happened next will never be completely unraveled, but the speed of development from the reign of Tri Songdetsen onward eventually placed a great deal of strain on life at the Tibetan court. There

were standoffs between Buddhists and older interests, there were persecutions and assassinations, and finally the court broke up entirely in 842 following the assassination of the last emperor of the dynasty by a monk. After Buddhism revived at the end of the tenth century, the polemical questions would be over *tantras* of the "old" and "new" translations as the Tibetans begin to establish their own lineages of teaching and transmission, the "new schools" (*gsar ma*) or orders (Raudsepp 2011). The arrival of the renowned teacher Atiśa (982–1054) at the behest of monk-king Jangchub Ö (Byang chub 'od, 984–1078) in Western Tibet in 1042 probably represents an attempt at using royal patronage to reestablish both political and doctrinal unity in central Tibet, but the remainder of Tibetan history demonstrates that this was never to happen, despite later attempts at synthesis or centralization.

Tibet remained post-imperial after 842, even while at times it was drawn into Mongolian and Chinese imperial designs. The first efforts of Atiśa to bring integration to the variety of new practices taking shape in Tibet did bear fruit, either through individual investment or under sponsorship by regional principalities (Davidson 2005). While during Atiśa's time and afterward Tibetans were importing tantric practices modeled on non-Buddhist cults (Sanderson 1994), in Tibet these in the main blended into the new stratified picture of the three vehicles (Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna/Mantrayāna) and were normalized. *Tantras* and tantric commentaries then became part of the Tibetan Buddhist canon compiled by Butön Rinchendrup (Bu ston Rin chen grub, 1290–1364) in the fourteenth century (the Kangyur, "translated word," and the Tengyur, "translated treatises").

TIME, TANTRA, AND CANONICITY

In the Tibetan traditions the approaches of the three vehicles are often explained through the simile of a poisonous plant (representing the ego-maintaining reactive emotions that involve us in cyclic existence). The first approach to dealing with this danger, the Hīnayāna ("Lesser Vehicle"), represents the option of avoiding the plant entirely; the second approach, that of the Mahāyāna ("Greater Vehicle"), represents the ability to apply antidotes (e.g., meditation on emptiness) that enables the practitioner to remain in the vicinity of the plant and help others who are likewise endangered; and the third approach of the Vajrayāna (or higher *tantras*) allows the poison to be transmuted alchemically into the nectar of awakening. In short, these are respectively paths of renunciation, salvation, and transformation.[12] This simile involves questions of time, as does the three-vehicle structure. The career of the bodhisattva's practice of the six perfections (generosity, ethics, patience, effort, concentration, and wisdom) and progression through the ten stages of awakening takes an inordinately long time; numerous, not to say hundreds or thousands of lifetimes. Yet if there are celestial buddhas and bodhisattvas who are already possessed of the transcendent wisdom that perceives emptiness, and who are already providing access to celestial rebirth in their pure lands and divine maṇḍalas, should it not be within their power to deliver much faster ways for devotees to join them in their quest?

I would argue that this is how time is supposed to be thought by practitioners in the tradition, i.e., in the context of altruistic motivation. The logic is not one of legitimation after the fact, but of production of efficacious methods. In temporal terms this is an emphasis on existential *duration* rather than historical *sequence*, although there are ongoing questions about sequence in an individual's practice. The following passage from Dakpo Tashi Namgyal (Dwags po bKra shis rnam rgyal, 1511–1587), a great lama and scholar of the Kagyu (bKa' brgyud) order of Tibetan Buddhism, comes in defense of the instantaneous

approach of the founder of his lineage, Gampopa (sGam po pa, 1079–1153).[13] It brings together many of the questions in the preceding discussion:

> [Critics of Gampopa's approach] certainly did not understand the meaning of the following passage from the earlier and later *Āhapramāṇasamyak* [*ka dpe gsar rnying*]:[14]

> The great medicine for seekers of gradual illumination
> Becomes a poison for seekers for instantaneous illumination;
> The great medicine for seekers of instantaneous illumination
> Becomes a poison for seekers of gradual illumination.

> The classical treatises of the sūtras hold that no tranquility can be achieved without first obtaining both perfect ease of body and mind, no insight without achieving tranquility, no realization of Thatness (of true reality) without these two (tranquility and insight). Those who were influenced deeply by this statement not only concluded that no one at present or in the future would achieve the meditation, but went so far as to pronounce that the present age is not meant for meditation. It was utterly wrong for them to turn their backs on meditation and to mislead others. Moreover, such an assertion would imply that the many different dharmas expounded by Buddha according to the different levels of seekers were wrong. If this were their attitude, they would be committing the karma of abandoning the key instructions of the esoteric path, which produces great results through little striving, and many distinct paths that originated from the illuminating experience of the great saints.

> (Takpo 1986: 144)

That is not to say that questions of historical sequence/s are entirely irrelevant to questions of legitimacy and productivity. From the very beginning we should give Tibetans credit for being aware of the questionable attribution of much of the religious material they were importing, and therefore also recognize that they were thus concerned with issues of quality, purity, and history. Some kind of temporal attribution to the Buddha, either directly or celestially (or through lineage transmission), was a feature of almost all works of any importance (and would continue to be, even with works clearly produced in Tibet; see below); as a result, problems of quality and purity had to be solved in other ways (Kapstein 2005: 2). Devotional practices aside, Mahāyāna doctrine, on paper anyway, focused on the threefold training (discipline, concentration, wisdom) expressed in the form of the six perfections on which the career of the bodhisattva is founded. These are of little threat to anyone. The tantric approach of working with the "poisons" and its attendant "left-hand" methodologies brought questions of legitimacy into sharper relief.[15] There was also the matter of sectarian rivalry, more than a hint of which can be heard in Dakpo Tashi Namgyal's defensiveness.

   Canons and texts rarely end up being the whole story. As David Gray observes in his discussion of the "myth" of the tantric canon, "Perhaps one of the most important and persistent ideas that underlies the tantric traditions of Buddhism is the notion that a complete collection of tantric scriptures, a Treasury of Tantras (*Tantrakośa*) or Collection of Tantras (*Tantrapiṭaka*), either did exist in the past, and/or continues to exist in an alternate level of reality" (Gray 2009: 1). With its assembly of visualizations, iconography, diagrams, gestures, yogas, offerings, spells, pledges, and initiations, *tantra* is the means of entry into

that timeless level of reality, preparing and eventually enabling the practitioner to blend with the deity (*lha*, the archetypal object of tantric visualization) and transform their own body, speech, and mind into the body, speech, and mind of a buddha. The nature of the timeless treasury is such that texts and language, products of history, only allow partial access – means are needed to allow the practitioner to settle within the pristine or intrinsic awareness of clear light mind.[16]

> One of the most important implications of the myth of the tantric canon is the idea that our knowledge of *tantras* is always fragmentary and incomplete, which leaves open *the door to further revelation*, and creates *the space for the construction of a hierarchy* to mediate access to the inaccessible store of wisdom.
>
> (Gray 2009: 15, emphasis added)

TIME: THE DOOR TO FURTHER REVELATION

The collapse of the Tibetan empire after the assassination of emperor Lang Darma (gLang dar ma, r. 838–842) in 842 had a number of significant consequences for the direction of the development of Buddhism in Tibet. What centralizing authority had been present in the imperial court at Rasa/Lhasa disappeared, taking with it the sponsorship it had been able to offer the monasteries. The collapse of the imperial administration also meant the disbanding of the army in a manner that Ronald Davidson has compared to the situation in Western Europe after the Black Death – dominated by wandering bands of armed men (Davidson 2005: 18). The break-up of organized monastic religion also meant a temporary retardation of Tibetan interaction with Buddhist north India, which in turn meant that the *tantras* that were popular after the revival of Buddhist institutions in the middle of the eleventh century – that is to say the *tantras* of the newly emerging indigenous lineages, or New Orders (Sarma, *gsar ma*) – emphasized practices that did not exist in the earlier period (Davidson 2005: 216). Unexpectedly, the breakup of the empire also cleared the way for the full indigenization of Buddhism, what Davidson has styled, again drawing European parallels, a "Tibetan Renaissance." In Tibetan historiography this new era is known as "the later spread of the doctrine" (*bstan pa phyi dar*), in contrast to that of the imperial period, "the earlier spread of the doctrine" (*bstan pa snga dar*).

The authority, organization, and resources for regrouping would eventually come from the old aristocratic clans, but this did not end up being directed toward a revival of centralized royal institutions; rather, local lords competed to establish themselves as the new Buddhist authorities while merchant families dominated the trans-Himalayan trade in texts. The fate of the original royal line remains something of a mystery, perhaps a sign of the royal household's tenuous reliance on other aristocratic families. Those same aristocratic families were eventually responsible for investing in bringing a renewal of Buddhist teachings from India, and as fate would have it, the flourishing Buddhist Pāla empire was still waiting for them not all that far south of the Himalayas, the number of its monastic universities now expanded. At the same time, it would not be long before Buddhism in India and Central Asia was annihilated by Muslim invasions – one of the stimuli for the appearance of the millenarian *Wheel of Time Tantra* (Skt. *Kālacakra-tantra*) traditions in the eleventh century – while Mongolian armies took control of the territory to Tibet's north.

Before he left this earth (or was hounded out of Tibet), Padmasambhava is believed by Tibetans to have secreted a large number of texts in the landscape of their country as

"treasures" (*gter ma*) to be rediscovered at a future time when they would be of greatest spiritual benefit. Probably the most famous of these is *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (*Bar do thos grol*, "Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate State"), first discovered by Karma Lingpa (Karma gling pa, 1352–1405) in the fourteenth or fifteenth century. While *terma* revelations were later developed into a threefold typology of "earth," "knowledge," and "pure vision" depending on the form of access the recipient (*gter ston*, treasure revealer) was given, the earliest revelations were associated with material remains left from the old empire (Davidson 2005: 213–215; Doctor 2005: 40). The sudden "discovery" of treasures in the tenth century probably emerged out of disagreement regarding the relative roles of lay and monastic interests in the "later dissemination." Davidson argues that the earliest "discoverers" of treasures in the tenth and eleventh centuries were lay mantrins (practitioners of secret mantra) with old aristocratic connections who had kept the embers of Buddhism glowing and who were now marginalized with the return of monasticism. They were committed to an older vision of the Buddhist tradition that allowed an alternative to the new Indian traditions and translations dominated by more influential parties (the translation effort required privileged access to resources to fund travel and expertise):

> [I]n the late tenth century the ancient Tibetan traditions were suddenly faced with alternative Sarma voices … in response, the older aristocratic lineage holders began to build on a practice that had already been initiated by Central Asian and Chinese monks, that texts could be revealed in the target civilization.

> (Davidson 2005: 216)

The treasure texts of the Nyingma Great Perfection were more than just one more innovation in the presentation of the Buddha's teachings. They were keyed into the traditional protectors and autochthonous spirits of Tibet's landscape, they offered a new "tradition" that identified the Buddhist emperors and other key figures of the former dynasty with Buddhist deities, they bore the imprimatur of the great Buddhist emperor Tri Songdetsen, and most important of all they opened a door of continuing communication with Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, and other revered guides to spiritual development, in the process having Padmasambhava raised up as a "second buddha," a status that would eventually be accepted by all Tibetans whatever their denominational allegiances. In essence the *terma* are important to the Nyingma (rNying ma, "old order") traditions in providing continuous renewal to the authority of Padmasambhava, bypassing the India so important in the New Order traditions while opening up a new space for spiritual expression. Later treasures also develop an intricate mythology through the hagiographies of Padmasambhava's twenty-five great disciples, among them Emperor Tri Songdetsen. At the same time, with Indian models driving intellectual fashion the Nyingma adherents were faced with the irony of the "old" becoming unconventional … in more ways than one!

Given the shaky historical ground on which tantric texts stood, it was unlikely that opponents were going to want to push too hard in questioning the *termas'* credentials (Doctor 2005: 39). Even in early Buddhist traditions there are anticipations of the decline of the true teachings after 500 years and their virtual disappearance until "rediscovery by a future Buddha" (Williams 2009: 12), and it may even be said the Mahāyāna tradition was founded upon Nāgārjuna's (ca. 150–250) retrieval of the *Perfection of Wisdom* from the realm of the *nāga* serpents. We find with the *terma* tradition, not for the first time in history, fideistic thinkers using skepticism as a fundamental defense in their arguments for faith

(Davidson 2005: 212; Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000: 163–165).[17] Treasures allowed the authority of the past to continue on as a physical, living presence and influence in the present, many *terma* contained prophesies that allowed the past to be extended into the future, and in the present they were not averse to incorporating or imitating new Indian material taken from the New Orders. When the *terma* traditions of the Nyingma were eventually taken up by the other orders, the holy land of India was no longer a viable source of renewal. The Buddhist Pāla empire (750–1174), which had ruled in ancient Bengal for over 400 years, came to an end, and with further portioning up of India between Muslim powers by the thirteenth century Buddhism in India had practically disappeared. As the influence of the subcontinent receded, the deification of the old religious kings of Tibet in the *terma* texts as earthly embodiments of buddhas and bodhisattvas would have consequences for native Tibetan conceptions of saintliness.

TIME: THE SPACE FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A HIERARCHY

With the influx of Indian Buddhist doctrines during the later spread of the doctrine in Tibet, new schools or orders of Buddhism emerged centered on particular lineages of teachers and the texts and practices they transmitted. The Sakya and Kagyu orders have their origins in this new fluorescence in eleventh-century Tibet, and their emergence as "new orders" also had the effect of consolidating the earlier tradition as the Nyingma ("old order"). The Gelug order was founded much later by followers of the great reformer Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa, 1357–1419) in the early fifteenth century, but it also inherited the monastic mantle of the Kadampa (bKa' gdams pa) order – whose roots are found in the eleventh-century missionary activity of Atiśa already noted above. There were other movements, many later salvaged through the nonsectarian movement (*ris med*) of the nineteenth century, but that these four traditions have gone on to remain active in the twenty-first century is testament to the importance of the eleventh-century foundations of the Tibetan traditions. It may be one of the ironies of history that this flourishing was a result of the disappearance of strong centralized power.

At the end of the twelfth century India may have been declining as a source of Buddhist inspiration, but Tibet was poised to become the new nexus of Buddhist learning. Before long the increasingly powerful Mongolian khans and princes to Tibet's north were taking an interest in Tibetan learning and territory. A Mongol invasion of Tibet in 1244 resulted in an alliance between the Sakya order and Mongol power, with the Sakya hierarch Chögyal Pagpa (Chos rgyal 'Phags pa, 1235–80) becoming "imperial preceptor" (*ti shri*; Ch. *dishi* 帝师) to Qubilai Qan (1215–94), and his nephew being made "chief ruler" (*dpon chen*) with authority over the thirteen "myriarchies" of Tibet under Mongol overlordship from 1268. This was not the first time Tibetans had served as imperial preceptors in lands to their north (Sperling 1987: 34): the Kagyu order had been cultivating a relationship with the Tangut court (Mi nyag; Ch. Xixia 西夏) just prior to the first attacks following Činggis Qan's (1162–1227) coronation in 1206 (the Tangut capital eventually falling in 1227, the year of Činggis's death). It is probably no coincidence that at this time the Karmapa hierarchs of the Kagyu order emerged as a formal system of reincarnating lamas, the first such reincarnation line in what would become an institution that remains unique to Tibetan Buddhism.

It is difficult not to see the emergence of the *tulku* institution in terms of ongoing rivalry between the Kagyu and Sakya orders at this time in relation to larger powers outside Tibet,

but it is also difficult to resist speculation that the appearance of reincarnate lamas *as an institution* was not an extension of the problem of administrative succession as it related to the sacral role Tibetan hierarchs were playing first in the Tangut empire and then to Qubilai, who in 1271 would found China's Yuan dynasty (1271–1368). The first institutionally recognized *tulku* in the history of Tibet was the second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi (1206–1283). He is said to have become known as the reincarnation of Karmapa I Düsum Khyenpa (Dus gsum mkhyen pa, 1110–93) due to his own recollection, and on his own passing he left instructions that would guide the identification of the next in line, Karmapa III Rangjung Dorjé (Rang 'byung rdo rje, 1285–1339).

If these were some of the sociopolitical conditions for the emergence of the *tulku* system, what were the doctrinal developments? One place to begin looking might be the *Vajra Verses on the Oral Tradition* composed by one of the Indian ancestors of the Kagyu order, Naropa (1016–1100). According to Bryan Cuevas, it is here that many of the finer details of the conceptualizations of the intermediate state between existences are worked out:

> The basic pattern involved a conflation of the four "existences" [or states] (*bhava*), the three-bodies theory,[18] and both the generation and completion phases of the supreme yoga. The result was a precise yogic system that emphasized the contemplative "blending" (*bsres ba*) of these triune components in a practice known as bringing the three bodies to the path (*sku gsum lam 'khyer*).
>
> (Cuevas 2003: 48)

Cuevas also gives an account of how these practices allowing yogic use of the clear light of death and control of rebirth were further refined and adapted through the practices of Naropa's Tibetan disciple Marpa (Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros, 1012–97/9) and Marpa's disciple Milarepa (Mi la ras pa, 1040–1123), whose chief student Gampopa had four great students, including Karmapa I Düsum Khyenpa, the first lama to take rebirth as a recognized *tulku*.

Again, none of these developments should be seen as particularly extraordinary in a Buddhist context. There are very early traditions in Buddhism of the Buddha speaking of his previous births and a whole tradition of Birth Stories (Skt. *Jātaka*) that provide a narrative of his journey to awakening, his bodhisattva career, through numerous lives. The ability to determine the destination of rebirth was also held by highly realized *siddhas* (tantric adepts) in India, and the very aim of Mahāyāna training was the development of awakened compassion as a bodhisattva, returning life after life for the benefit of all sentient beings. In this interpretation the Vajrayāna should be viewed as a continuation of the Mahāyāna, the tantric "technologies" merely providing means for its full realization. There are also traditions in Tibet regarding the commitment of Padmasambhava's twenty-five disciples, all fully realized adepts, to take rebirth in accord with their aspirations for the propagation of the guru's dharma, and their incarnation lines still continue. Depending on one's point of view on these matters, however, given their development in later "treasure" traditions these accounts may postdate the period when the idea of the *tulku* was first initiated as an organized institution in the thirteenth century. And it is this eventual organization of the *tulku* as an institution that is most remarkable (Wylie 1978).

It is no coincidence that the reincarnate lama system originated and developed in the order that performed best at bringing monasticism together with yogic approaches, Gampopa's Dakpo Kagyu (Davidson 2005: 289). As time moved on, the *tulku* system

provided a mechanism for abbatial succession in monastic centers belonging to all the orders as they were established, with varying regional commitments, across the Tibetan plateau. The *tulku* are a kind of religious royalty, with monastic seats and mansions (richly adorned but not supporting a life of luxury) to which they were returned in each life upon recognition as a child (*yang srid*). Unlike royalty, which depends on bloodline, they have spiritual genealogies that enable reproduction while remaining celibate monks (which may not always be a status necessary for tulkuhood). And while incarnation lines may be suppressed from time to time, excepting the annihilation of the entire community of devotees – and lamas traveled extensively establishing communities in a diversity of locations – there is no royal bloodline to be eradicated via assassination.

UNTIMELY MEDITATIONS

> We should care for our responsibilities as much as we care for our eyes. If not, all we do is collect causes of a rebirth in one of the hell regions. The wheel of time continues to turn day and night as we continue to spend our time and energy just creating problems for people we don't like and favouring those we like. Meanwhile, our actual work never gets done. We cannot keep even our own house in order, let alone doing any thing useful for the country.
>
> (His Holiness the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Thubten Gyatso,
> "Sermon at the Great Prayer Festival," 1930.
> Trans. Glenn H. Mullin (1988: 263))

The three Tibetan institutions of *tantra*, *terma*, and *tulku*, founded between the seventh and thirteenth centuries, remain in place at the beginning of the twenty-first (most remarkably *terma*, see Terrone 2002; Holmes-Tagchungdarpa 2012). Joining the rest of the world effectively at the end of the nineteenth century, surrounded by a struggle between great states for power in Central Asia ("the Great Game"), Tibet was met with an emerging international community whose principal ideology was centered on the history of the nation-state, nations governed by the clock (clock tower having replaced steeple) and the clock's particular order of rationality. The consequences for Tibet's achieving nationhood are well known, but there have been consequences also for our three Tibetan "temporal technologies" as they have had to adjust to this changing world.

Even His Holiness the fourteenth Dalai Lama has been hard-pressed at times to explain the temporal enigmas of the *tantras* to modern Tibetan audiences and more particularly Western audiences. In surveying the Dalai Lama's teachings on the *Kālacakra-tantra* or *Wheel of Time Tantra* – a *tantra* (like others) that is known only through abridgements and commentaries and that first appeared in Tibet only in the eleventh century and not much earlier in India – Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim has traced how his approach to teaching its history has evolved to meet the needs of different audiences. The *Stainless Light* (Skt. *Vimal-aprabhā*) synopsis of the *Kālacakra-tantra* may state that the *tantra* is taught "throughout the three times by countless buddhas" (Yoeli-Tlalim 2004: 239), but this introduces Western practitioners (at least) to a type of rationality that involves forms of faith they may not have initially associated with Buddhism.

The Dalai Lama is the most recent embodiment of a *tulku* lineage going back to the fourteenth century and is regarded by Tibetans as an emanation of the bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokiteśvara. His role as the exiled temporal and spiritual leader of Tibet

has involved him in several ongoing crises over the *tulku* institution, a matter that also affects him personally. His recognition of the eleventh Panchen Lama (Paṇ chen bla ma) in 1995 resulted in the young boy Gendun Chokyi Nyima (dGe 'dun chos kyi nyi ma, 1989–) being spirited away by the Chinese government and replaced by a puppet. This immediately raised questions about what would happen when the time came to identify the next Dalai Lama, and it has also led to unhappy outcomes for the two boys, one becoming a state prisoner and the other, Gyeltsen Norbu (rGyal mtshan nor bu, 1990–), an unwelcome symbol of Chinese power (International Campaign for Tibet 2007). In John Powers' analysis,

> Tibet's most important cultural markers relate to religion, and because China's leaders are not Buddhists they cannot use them as part of their campaign. Indeed, many of their attempts to do so … have the reverse effect, resulting in absurd situations where reincarnations are enthroned by officials who do not believe in reincarnation.
>
> (Powers 2004: 147)

The Chinese state's management of *tulkus* (not just the selection process, but also their "patriotic education": Ch. *aiguozhuyi jiaoyu* 爱国主义教育; Tib. *rgyal gces chos gces slob gso*) only strengthens the attractions of the Dalai Lama as representing an alternative to state control. His Holiness and other *tulkus* able to manifest exemplary behavior have for centuries been recognized by their communities as *kapjé* (*skyabs rje*), "lords of refuge" whose realization protects all from the dangers of cyclic existence.

Yet the *tulku* system in its new context does raise questions of hierarchy for many, as well as questions regarding international conventions on the rights of children, both questions that have led to discussion among representatives of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. In a recent essay on "Tibetan Buddhism as a World Religion," Geoffrey Samuel reflects:

> In retrospect, this re-creation of Tibetan monastic institutions in exile is perhaps an even more remarkable achievement than it appeared at the time, and we can see how all subsequent developments within Tibetan Buddhism [worldwide] depended upon it … Just why, in what were extraordinarily difficult circumstances, did things happen in this way? Why, in particular, did the various traditions retain so much separateness and individual identity?
>
> (Samuel 2005: 298)

A simple answer, and one he goes on in effect to cover, is that lineage and transmission remain important outside of external conditions, but also that hierarchy is a condition internal to lineage. Lineage implies hierarchy, hierarchy implies lineage.[19] Hierarchy has been a feature of religion everywhere, and for a long time, and hierarchy in many ways *was* religion. It is unclear if religion of any kind can participate significantly in our present and future world and at the same time continue with established hierarchies, even while some religions have been better prepared by history for this challenge than others. The nonsectarian Rimé movement of Tibet's early modern history has been a source of inspiration and guidance for many of the most innovative lamas, but their status as lamas and *tulkus* appears to have remained something western followers have wanted up to this point. Some could be accused of investing in that hierarchy, while others have suggested a rethink (Batchelor 2011).

Tibetan Buddhism has at times been assigned the label "medieval," as has Tibetan culture. More recently it has, on the contrary, experienced being fashionable, being the latest thing. These are quite contrary temporal events experienced in relatively quick succession, which points to a pre-existing and continuing instability in Tibet's temporality in regard to the West's popular and intellectual perception of it. Being the latest thing, too, has a certain precariousness that goes with it, and there is a real possibility that it will become stale, that the message, for example, "that all beings want happiness," will become thinner and thinner. That is the way time appears to work under the conditions of late capitalism. Are there as yet untapped resources within the Tibetan tradition, "hidden treasures" that will make their mark in the remarkable new century ahead? We know that as the Tibetan tradition adapts to these current challenges it actually emerged and took its present shape in response to similar crises in the past. If the past record is any indication, the innovations that will arise in the coming decades will in all likelihood relate to temporal visions and perspectives. We don't know what they will be, but we do know that the conditions of memory and oblivion are very different. For example, how will memory continue to be linked to place? Things have moved very quickly since the Dalai Lama's escape into exile in 1959, yet in an ongoing and deeply felt sense his exile has left the Tibetan people in a state of waiting: on both sides of the border, and also in their hearts. Treasures continue to be associated with the ancient empire, perhaps as never before.[20]

NOTES

1   As Christian Wedemeyer points out in his "genealogy of the historiography of tantric Buddhism,"

> [w]hile the entire question of patterns of development in the literature and ideas of Buddhist Tantrism bears inquiry – indeed, it is precisely in the construction of a relative chronology of Buddhist Tantric texts that the most promising avenue of historiographical inquiry lies – scholarship has not yet reached the point where such claims can be adequately justified.
>
> (2001: 254)

Wedemeyer's main target is the influential early nineteenth-century conclusion that *tantra* is a corruption of early Buddhism, as well as its perhaps longer-lasting corollary that tantrism is a later development that became increasingly transgressive (= "corrupt"?) with each step in innovation, a pattern that appears to mirror the more established understanding of an evolution proceeding from early monastic *prātimokṣa* vows, through the Mahāyāna expansion of the *prātimokṣa* in accord with the bodhisattva ideal, and then, following the bodhisattva vows, the *samaya* vows of Vajrayāna Buddhism (van Schaik 2010: 61). I also risk running another comparably narrow boundary here, namely the anthropologist's assumption that abstract concerns, such as happiness and its causes, rarely concern ordinary village or nomad folk who are focused on "heaven and improved worldly status" (Lichter and Epstein 1983: 223–24). As an anthropologist here entering somewhat unfamiliar territory, I attempt to avert these errors with the constant reminder that anthropologists are the peasants of the scholarly world.

2   While the texts of *tantras* appeared from the late seventh century onwards, they are inevitably backdated to the time of the Buddha, given an origin in a space outside time altogether, or both, and for me at least this is a sign of their revelatory function (in addition to other signs of their divine origins). As I will make clear below, in line with Guenther (1968), I do not believe we should see revelation as necessarily "less philosophical." I should note also that in the paper just cited Guenther is discussing Great Perfection revealed "treasure" *tantras* (see later in the chapter).

3   In this "succession of moments" (as opposed to linked points in time) approach I am guided by practices of the new historicists (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000: 20–48), who are guided in part

by Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1953 [1946]) and Francis Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning* (1623) in conjuring out of the canon, "without exhausting themselves or their readers," a "historically specific spirit of representation" (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2000: 36, 37). For what is becoming a lineage of specialized studies that apply literary theory to the analysis of Tibetan religious history, see Goodman (1983), Katz (1984), Kapstein (2000, particularly Chapter 9, "Samantabhadra and Rudra: Myths of Innate Enlightenment and Radical Evil"), Cabezón (2001), Gray (2005), and Raudsepp (2011).

4   This is of course a simplification of a problem of considerable historical diversity. For an introduction to the range of problems, see the papers in O'Flaherty (1980).

5   The wheel of life, Buddhism's (and Tibet's) most famous "visual aid," is sometimes translated as "wheel of becoming." There is also an allied concept of a "wheel of the round of rebirths" (Skt. *saṃsāracakra*, P. *saṃsāra cakka*). For an account of both, see Buddhagosa, *Visuddhimagga* (fifth century CE). In some accounts it is said to have been originally designed as a work of religious art by the Buddha for his patron King Bimbisāra (582–554 BCE, 558–491 BCE), who was in need of something suitably impressive in exchange for a precious gift of armor from a neighboring king (Rechung 1989); in others the Buddha devised it as a way of communicating the Elder Moggallana's teaching of the five (later six) destinies of rebirth more broadly (Khantipalo 1970) as he could not be in more than one place at one time. Ven. Khantipalo's source text is a Sarvastivadin [sic] account of the wheel's invention by the Buddha from the *Sahasodgata Avadāna*, *Divyāvadāna* 21. Cave 17 at Ajanta, where the earliest extant depiction of the *bhavacakra* is found, was started in 463 CE (Spink 2007: 204), and the cave itself, sponsored by King Upendragupta, was the model adapted for *vīhāras* in the later expansion of Mahāyāna Buddhism in northern India and into Tibet.

6   Tibet annexed the cave temple site of Dunhuang in the 780s. The documents stored there over the subsequent centuries were discovered by a Chinese monk in 1907. 7   There is a general consensus that Tibetan beliefs at this time had received strong influence from Chinese and Indian ideas related to conceptions of royal charisma (Macdonald 1971: 367; Stein 2010 [1985]). It is also clear that during the Tibetan imperial period China and Central Asia were equal to India, if not more important, as sources of Buddhism and translated Buddhist texts.

8   While there is doctrinal agreement on his lifespan being eighty years, there is no single agreed dating for the life of the Buddha. Recent scholarship has centered on a life spanning the fifth century BCE: "The death of the Buddha should be placed much nearer 400 BCE than 500 BCE" (Williams 2009: 10). According to some traditions the commentarial material accompanying the *Kālacackra-tantra* (see later in the chapter) portrays him teaching in the ninth century BCE.

9   The Samyé debate, if there actually was one, occurred during a period when the Tibetan empire was able to capture the Tang capital, Chang'an, in 763 (dates from Kapstein 2000: xvii). The first Buddhist *temple* in Tibet was Trandruk, a royal shrine built during the reign of Songtsen Gampo.

10   The earliest evidence for *doxological* discussions of *tantra* in India relates to the middle of the eighth century. Concerns around political aspects of *tantra*, particularly some violent or coercive practices, meant the ruling elite placed strict controls on what was promulgated; nevertheless, royal figures such as Tri Songdetsen appear to have actively sought to import tantric texts from India for their own purposes (Davidson 2005: 215; Weinberger 2010). These tensions may also relate to Davidson's observation that "the early Nyingma tantras are much more philosophical and abstract than their Indian prototypes" (2005: 228).

11   Étienne Lamotte gives 35–32 BCE for the writing down of the Canon (1988: 364–71, cited in Gray 2005: 241 n. 9), by no means a completely unified process. We may even wonder if the appearance of Mahāyāna texts soon afterward is an effect of the tradition being written down, an extension of the process of Buddhism's literary narrativization.

12   The approach of the Great Perfection is sometimes explained as a separate alternative, that of self-liberation (or "relaxation"?)

13   Something of a forbidden topic, or at least an easy target for opponents or competitors, since the reputed expulsion of exponents Chinese. Gampopa's approach was to suffer a concerted attack in the thirteenth century (Davidson 2005: 289).

14   There is some doubt over this identification of the text. Kongtrul Lodro Thaye's *Treasury of Knowledge* has "the former and latter *Authoritative Texts of Six Dharmas*" (*chos drug bka' pe snga phyi*) (Skt. *Pravacanottaropamā*, Tohoku no. 2332 [=*bka' pe snga ma*, *bka' pe phyi ma*?]) (Harding 2007: 397 n. 33). See also Torricelli (1996).

15   These included orgiastic elements within the language and practice of tantric initiation involving sexual practices, ritual pollution, intoxication, and killing, as well as inversions of ordinary ethical precepts. There is a refrain through Tibetan history condemning their misuse, and accusations of excess and corruption played a role in the founding of the Sakya (Sa skya) and Gelug (dGe lugs) orders.

16   Given "the extreme resistance, inherited from certain of the earlier Buddhist philosophical traditions, to an affirmative discourse concerning ultimate reality," even these refined terms function metaphorically (Kapstein 2004: 125). There may even be a danger of error in drawing distinctions between clear light mind and everyday experience.

17   That is to say, when the credentials of the treasures were challenged by skeptics as requiring an unusual leap of faith it was not difficult for supporters of the treasures to find equally untested foundations underlying the positions of even the skeptics, thereby finding refuge behind the skeptics' skepticism. Gallagher and Greenblatt discuss this logic in relation to the standoff between Catholicism, Protestantism, and the first stirrings of the Enlightenment in the sixteenth century.

18   Fully awakened beings continue to act on three levels: the body of reality (*chos sku*, Skt. *dharma-kāya*), the body of perfect rapture (*longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku*, Skt. *saṃbhoga-kāya*), and the emanational body (*sprul pa'i sku*, Skt. *nirmāṇa-kāya*). These are also related to a system of microcosm–macrocosm correlations e.g., mind, speech, and body, and even death, intermediate state, and rebirth.

19   Michael Aris wrote of Tibetan religious institutions'

> preoccupation, sometimes to the point of obsession, with the lines of continuity that link present institutions, or their scattered remains, to both divine and human origins … In their sheer multiplicity they reveal the intensely competitive and diversified world that gave them birth.

> (1997: 9)

"Intensely competitive" may be an impression created by the compressed perspective of history, but Samuel comes to a similar if milder conclusion about the dynamic contemporary survival of the tradition when describing the "entrepreneurial logic of Tibetan Buddhism" (2005: 309).

20   The author would like to dedicate this essay to the memory of the Ninth Traleg Kyabgon Rinpoche (b. 1955), who passed away in Melbourne in 2012. May he quickly return.

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THE EMERGENCE OF
AMERICAN BUDDHISM

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Charles S. Prebish

INTRODUCTION: PRE-1965 BUDDHIST
HISTORY IN AMERICA[1]

Although it is rather common to refer to Oriental influences in the writings of such prominent American literary figures as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Walt Whitman, the more specifically Buddhist beginnings in America can be traced to the Chinese immigrants who began to appear on the West Coast in the 1840s. Prior to the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill, the number of Chinese immigrants was small, but with the news of the golden wealth in the land, the figure increased exponentially. Rick Fields has suggested that by 1852, 20,000 Chinese were present in California, and within a decade, nearly one-tenth of the California population was Chinese (1992: 70–71). In the Chinese temples that dotted that California coastline, the religious practice was an eclectic blend of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, and although there were a number of Buddhist priests in residence, a distinctly Chinese Buddhism on the North American continent did not develop until much later.

The Japanese presence in America developed more slowly than the Chinese, but had much greater impact. By 1890, the Japanese population was barely 2,000. The World Parliament of Religion, however, held in conjunction with the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, radically changed the entire landscape for Japanese Buddhism in America. Among the participants at the parliament was Shaku Sōen (1860–1919). Sōen returned to America in 1905, lectured in several cities, and established a basic ground for the entry of Zen. Upon his return to Japan in 1906, three of his students were selected to promote the Rinzai lineage in America.

The first of Sōen's students, Nyōgen Senzaki (1876–1958), came to California in the first decade of the twentieth century, but delayed his teaching mission until 1922. Sōen's second disciple, Shaku Sōkatsu (1870–1954), lived in America from 1906 to 1908, and again from 1909 to 1910, but eventually returned to Japan without having made much impact. By far Sōen's most noted disciple, and the man who made the most impact on the early growth of Buddhism in America, was Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (1870–1966). Suzuki worked for Open Court Publishing Company in LaSalle, Illinois, from 1897 to 1909, but returned to Japan to pursue a career in Buddhist Studies. He visited America again from 1936 until the beginning

of World War II, and eventually returned for a final time from 1950 to 1958, lecturing frequently in American universities and cities.

Nonetheless, the Rinzai lineage was not the only one to develop in America. The Sōtō tradition (the other major branch of Japanese Zen) began to appear in America in the 1950s. By the mid-1950s, Soyu Matsuoka Rōshi (1912–97) had established the Chicago Buddhist Temple, and Shunryu Suzuki Rōshi (1904–71) arrived in San Francisco in 1959, founding the San Francisco Zen Center shortly thereafter. The Dharma successors to Suzuki Rōshi have continued the Sōtō lineage, while other teachers in this lineage, including female rōshis, have also appeared.

In addition to the traditional forms of Rinzai and Sōtō Zen, still another form of Zen appeared in America, one that attempts to harmonize the major doctrines and practices of each school into a unified whole. Proponents of this approach included Taizan Maezumi Rōshi (1931–95, who arrived in 1956), Hakuun Yasutani Rōshi (1885–1973, who visited the United States first in 1962, and who visited regularly until his death in 1973), and Philip Kapleau (1912–2004), an American by birth who first learned about Japanese religion and culture while serving as a court reporter in 1946 during the War Crimes Trials held in Tokyo. Maezumi Rōshi and Kapleau Rōshi have been enormously successful. Maezumi Rōshi established the Zen Center of Los Angeles, where he resided until his death in 1995. He left a dozen Dharma heirs, many of whom have developed their own vital, creative communities. Kapleau Rōshi too was quite successful, having built a stable Zen community in Rochester, New York that was notable for its attempt to develop an American style for Zen practice. Also significant are Robert Aitken Rōshi (1917–2010), who founded the Diamond Sangha in Hawaii in 1959, Eidō Shimano Rōshi (1932–), who first came to the United States as a translator for Yasutani Rōshi, and Joshu Sasaki Rōshi (1907–2014), who founded the Cimarron Zen Center in Los Angeles in 1966 and the Mt. Baldy Zen Center five years later.

Zen was surely not the only Japanese Buddhist tradition to make an appearance in America before the turn of the twentieth century. In 1898 two Japanese missionaries, Shuei Sonoda and Kakuryo Nishijima, were sent to San Francisco to establish the Buddhist Mission of North America, an organization associated with a Pure Land school of Japanese Buddhism. Although seriously hampered by the Japanese Immigration Exclusion Act of 1924, by 1931, thirty-three main temples were active. With the outbreak of World War II, more than 100,000 Japanese Americans (more than half of whom were Buddhist and two-thirds American born) were relocated to internment camps. In 1944, the name Buddhist Mission of North America was changed to Buddhist Churches of America.

In the 1960s, another form of Japanese Buddhism appeared on the American landscape. It was known as Nichiren Shōshū of America, and by 1974, it boasted 258 chapters and over 200,000 members (although these figures were highly suspect). This group grew out of the Sōka Gakkai movement in Japan, a non-meditative form of Buddhism that based its teachings on the thirteenth-century figure Nichiren (1222–82) and his emphasis on the doctrines and practices focusing on or deriving from the famous *Lotus-sūtra*. Brought to this country by Masayasa Sadanaga (who changed his name to George Williams), the organization set up headquarters in Santa Monica, where it began an active program of proselytizing. Although the group has splintered, it remains a formidable Buddhist presence in America, having become extremely attractive among Euro-American and African American Buddhists.

Although not nearly so visible as the Japanese Buddhist groups, several Chinese Buddhist organizations have appeared in the last half-century. Perhaps the most notable of these is a largely monastic group originally known as the Sino-American Buddhist Association which, until his death, was under the direction of a venerable monk named Hsüan-Hua (1918–95). Established in 1959, this organization developed a huge monastery in Talmadge, California known as the "City of Ten Thousand Buddhas," which serves as the headquarters of what is now identified as the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. Of even larger size is the Hsi-Lai Temple outside Los Angeles, founded in 1978, and now offering a wide variety of Buddhist teachings and services. Other Chinese Buddhist groups can be found in virtually every major metropolitan area. The religious practice of the Chinese Buddhist groups in America is largely an eclectic combination of various Buddhist schools, combining Chan, Vinaya, Tiantai, Tantra, and Pure Land practices. Most of these practices are Mahāyāna-based, and a similar kind of approach is followed by the Vietnamese Buddhist groups that have begun to appear in urban areas, largely as a result of a large influx of Vietnamese immigrants following the termination of the United States' involvement in Vietnam.

The Buddhist culture to enter America most recently is the Tibetan. Although a few Buddhist groups appeared in the West prior to 1960, the majority came after the Tibetan holocaust, during which the Communist Chinese made every effort to extinguish religion in Tibet. Following an immediate exile in India, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sikkim, the diaspora has widened, with many Tibetans seeking to reestablish their sacred lineages on American soil. Communities from each of the four major Tibetan sects can now be found in America, with those founded by Tarthang Tulku (1934–) and Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche (1939–87) being especially popular and visible. The Tibetan groups are the most colorful of all the Buddhist groups now prospering in America, possessing a rich tradition of Buddhist art and a powerful psychological approach to mental health. They continue to grow rapidly, being very attractive to American convert Buddhists. It is no wonder, then, that they quote the thousand-year-old saying attributed to the sage Padmasambhava (fl. seventh–eighth century) to explain their rapid growth: "When the iron bird flies, and horses run on wheels, the Tibetan people will be scattered like ants across the World, and the Dharma will come to the land of the Red Man."

The final sectarian tradition to be considered is that of the Theravāda. Until quite recently, most Theravāda groups in the United States were similar to the Buddhist Vihāra Society in Washington, D.C., an organization founded in 1965 under the direction of the Venerable Bope Vinita from Sri Lanka, and appealing to the large diplomatic community in the nation's capital. Now, however, as many Buddhists from Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and Burma have migrated to the United States to escape the economic and political uncertainty of their native homes, there is a vigorous new infusion of Theravāda Buddhism into America.

INFLUENCES ON BUDDHISM'S POST-1965 GROWTH IN AMERICA

Following the 1965 amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, the population of immigrants from Asia grew dramatically, as did the number of Buddhists flowing into America. As Wendy Cadge has pointed out (2005: 6), the 1965 Immigration Act ended country-of-origin quotas, which led to both ethnic and religious diversification throughout America. In the decade of the 1960s, Buddhism was to experience the largest,

fastest, and most dynamic growth spurt in its short history on the American scene. Its rapid rise presented Buddhism with as many potential liabilities as it did opportunities.

In the first place, the undeclared war in Vietnam again focused continued awareness on Asia. As reports of pacifist Buddhist monks engaging in acts of self-immolation began to filter back to America in the media, a proliferation of books appeared, prepared by journalists, practitioners, and scholars alike. In academia, Buddhist Studies began to emerge as an independent discipline, usually embodied as an aspect of the many developing Area Studies Programs in American universities. The most notable of these was the Buddhist Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin. Shortly thereafter, other programs, initially at Columbia University, Harvard University, the University of Chicago, and the University of California at Berkeley, began to offer comprehensive training in Buddhist Studies.

In the social domain, the most significant development for Buddhism in America was the emergence of a considerable counterculture, from which Buddhism was to recruit some of its most ardent supporters. Theodore Roszak, in his influential book *The Making of a Counter Culture*, suggested that the counterculture was an exploration of the "politics of consciousness" (1969: 156). By the end of the decade of the 1960s, many Americans were associating consciousness awareness and expansion with the varieties of Buddhist meditation that were becoming prevalent on the American scene. The most immediate predecessors of the hippies were the "Beats" of the 1950s, and even Jack Kerouac (1922–69) himself conceded that the hippies were the descendants of the Beats. Thus the Beats had an enormous influence on the Buddhism that was developing on the American scene, and "Beat Zen," as it was called, became popular and contrary to the "Square Zen" of other popularizers like Alan Watts (1915–73).

On the religious front, the entire religious situation in America was in turmoil. There was a continuous drop in church attendance, possibly indicative of a declining faith in the value of religion or its importance in an increasingly secular society. When Peter Berger argued that secularization brought about a demonopolization of religious traditions eventually leading to a pluralistic situation, he was describing a religious "market situation" in which Buddhism was certain to thrive. Buddhism took advantage of the mitigation of its somewhat alien appearance by the religious fellowship inherent in the important ecumenical movement to gain new footholds in the American domain (1966: 134). Thus by the end of the 1960s, there were more Buddhist groups, and with greater diversity, than ever existed before in America.

In spite of the above, Buddhism was still searching for a lifestyle consonant with its pursuits in America. There was virtually no monastic community or *sangha* present, and there were almost no Buddhist monks or nuns in residence. Thus Buddhist community meant *lay* community, and, to a large extent, *city* community. New American Buddhist communities of the 1960s and 1970s, however, faced other problems that proved difficult. Because Buddhist communities tended to define themselves more in terms of what they rejected than what they affirmed, a severe sense of ambiguity persisted, making it quite easy for new converts to withdraw from the *sangha* altogether or jump from one Buddhist community to another as "*Dharma* hoppers."

Up to this point, the Buddhist movement in America, and specifically Buddhist community life, had been a city movement. Nevertheless, in the 1970s a large number of Buddhists deserted the city and sought to practice their religion in a wilderness setting. Some of these practitioners simply rejected the evils and complexity of city life; others seemed to be motivated by a concern for the preservation of a sane ecological environment;

and a goodly number were naïvely pursuing a "back to nature" way of life. Within a short while, and in decades to come, these practitioners mostly returned to urban life, having learned that Buddhism has always maintained that the best place to practice Buddhism is precisely *where you are* and that the environment that needs tending is the *interior* environment.

CONTINUING HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

By 1970, virtually the full extent of Asian Buddhist sects was represented in America, and there was a plethora of Asian Buddhist teachers in permanent residence in the growing number of American Buddhist centers. Dozens of *rōshis*, along with their Dharma-heirs, many Tibetan reincarnate lamas (*tülku*), Chinese monks and nuns, and an increasing number of Theravāda monks from various South and Southeast Asian cultures were now visibly active on American soil. The presence of a growing number of Asian Buddhist teachers in America has been complemented and augmented by regular visits from global Buddhist leaders such as the Dalai Lama (1935–) and Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–).

Further, these Asian Buddhist teachers, and the gradually increasing number of American Buddhist masters, have been able to establish an institutional foundation that is stable, solid, and even ecumenical in nature. In 1987 a conference on "World Buddhism in North America" was held at the University of Michigan during which a 'Statement of Consensus" (Rosch 1987: 28) was promulgated (a) to create the conditions necessary for tolerance and understanding among Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike; (b) to initiate a dialogue among Buddhists in North America in order to further mutual understanding, growth in understanding, and cooperation; (c) to increase a sense of community by recognizing and understanding the differences as well as the common beliefs and practices; and (d) to cultivate thoughts and actions of friendliness towards others, whether they accept Buddhist beliefs or not, and in so doing approach the world as the proper field of Dharma, not as a sphere of conduct irreconcilable with the practice of Dharma. Geographically situated organizations, like the Sangha Council of Southern California, and associations of the students of famous Buddhist masters, such as the White Plum Asanga, linking the Dharma-heirs of Taizan Maezumi Rōshi, are now becoming commonplace in the American Buddhist movement.

The availability of accurate primary and secondary literature on Buddhism expanded almost exponentially in the latter half of the twentieth century. Many of these publications focused on the Western Buddhist tradition. Many pages of scholarly bibliographic sources on American Buddhism can be found in various sources (Prebish 1999: 301–10; Prebish and Baumann 2002: 383–99). The trade market publication of popular books on aspects of American Buddhism is even larger. As of 1994, nearly two dozen North American universities could boast at least two full-time faculty members devoted to the academic discipline of Buddhist Studies, and nearly 150 academic scholars of Buddhism were located on the North American continent, many of whom can best be identified as "scholar-practitioners." A decade later, each of these statistics had grown substantially. Moreover, the American Buddhist movement was aided by the presence of a growing number of individuals who have traveled to Asia for extensive training and then returned to the United States to share their approach with Americans. One of the most successful enterprises of this kind is the Insight Meditation Center in Barre, Massachusetts, initially guided by Joseph

Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, Sharon Salzberg, and Christina Feldman, each of whom received extensive *vipassanā* (insight) training in Asia.

It is now very common for university courses on Buddhism in North American universities to be taught by professors who, in addition to having sophisticated academic credentials in Buddhist Studies, also happen to be practicing Buddhists in one of the many rich and varied Buddhist traditions that have proliferated in the West as part of Buddhism's profound globalization, that is, the "scholar-practitioners" referred to above.

Not surprisingly, stories reflecting the study/practice dichotomy in Buddhism are abundant in both the primary and secondary literature on the subject. During the first century BCE, in response to a concern over the possible loss of the Buddhist Canon (*Tripiṭaka*) during a severe famine, a question arose: What is the basis of the "Teaching" (that is, *Sāsana*) – learning or practice? A clear difference of opinion resulted in the development of two groups: the Dhammakathikas, who claimed that learning was the basis of the *Sāsana*, and the Paṃsukūlikas, who argued for practice as the basis. The Dhammakathikas apparently won out. The two vocations described above came to be known as *gantha-dhura*, or the "vocation of books," and *vipassanā-dhura*, or the "vocation of meditation," with the *former* being regarded as the superior training (because surely meditation would not be possible if the teachings were lost). Moreover, not the least characteristic of these two divisions was that the *vipassanā-dhura* monks began to live in the forest, where they could best pursue their vocation undisturbed, while the *gantha-dhura* monks began to dwell in villages and towns. As such, the *gantha-dhura* monks began to play a significant role in Buddhist education. It would probably not be going too far in referring to the *gantha-dhura* monks as "scholar-monks." Why is this distinction so important? It is significant because the scholar-monks were responsible for the education of the laity; for cultivating a "Buddhist literacy" among the ordinary practitioners of the tradition. While this was a normative practice in the ancient Buddhist tradition, Buddhism in the Western world has not favored a monastic lifestyle. As such, the education of the laity has been left to teachers who are no longer trained as scholar-monks. In fact, while many of the leaders and authorized teachers in the various Western Buddhist groups have had formal monastic and scholarly training at some point, many – if not most – have abandoned the monastic and scholarly lifestyle altogether. This fostered a "scholarship gap" in the global Buddhist community. To a large extent, this gap is rapidly being filled by the academic scholar-practitioners who, although not living as full-fledged monastics, have solid scholarly and academic training grounded in a rigorous personal practice.

Prior to 1975, there weren't very many places in North America where one could pursue graduate-level academic training in Buddhist Studies and get the solid grounding necessary to become an authentic scholar-practitioner. By 1995, when I conducted the second of two statistical surveys of Buddhist Studies scholars in North America, I was able to verify that one could do advanced work in Buddhist Studies at no less than sixteen universities or colleges, and the anecdotal data supplied by my informants supported my suspicion that between one-quarter and one-half of the people whose teaching focused on Buddhist Studies were scholar-practitioners. Two years later, when Duncan Ryūken Williams published an article called "Where to Study?" in the Spring 1997 issue of *Tricycle*, he listed twenty-two universities with extensive resources in Buddhist Studies, including a special category of universities he called "Practitioner-Friendly Institutions" (1997: 115–17). Clearly, an "American School of Buddhist Studies" was fermenting in the years after 1970, and it now rivals and perhaps even surpasses, the earlier "Anglo-German," "Franco-Belgian," and

"Leningrad" schools of Buddhology. Most obviously, this rapid development was fueled by the twin spires of the fast-growing interest in Buddhism, generally, on the part of North Americans, and the establishment of the "Buddhism Section" of the American Academy of Religion as the chief academic venue for Buddhist Studies in North America.

At the very heart of this exciting development of North American Buddhist Studies was the role that scholar-practitioners were actively playing. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, some estimates placed the number of Buddhists in the United States as high as six million. There are currently more academic courses in the study of Buddhism than ever before, and with the huge explosion of well-written and informative trade volumes published on virtually all aspects of Buddhism, a genuine "Buddhist literacy" has developed in North America, one that made it increasingly easier for scholar-practitioners to finally appear publicly and vocally.

Despite the above data, it still seems fair to suggest that the scholarship versus practice dichotomy persists to some degree. In North America, in the absence of the traditional "scholar-monks" so prevalent in Asia, it really does appear that the "scholar-practitioners" of today's North American universities are indeed *beginning* to fulfill the role of "quasi-monastics" or serve at least as treasure-troves of Buddhist literacy and information, functioning as guides through whom one's understanding of the Dharma may be sharpened, irrespective of whether it occurs in the university or practice center.

Quite apart from issues relating to the specificity with which American Buddhist life is manifested (lay versus monastic ideals; urban versus rural lifestyle), a distinct and unique application of Buddhist ethics, creatively called "socially engaged Buddhism," has emerged that demonstrates in dramatic fashion both the *active* and *optimistic* approach of today's American Buddhism. Organizations like the Buddhist Peace Fellowship, founded in 1978, aggressively demonstrate how to strike a careful balance between meditational training and political activism. Their task in bringing this activism and optimism to the American Buddhist public has been aided by a strong new Buddhist journalism in America that has fostered exciting publications such as *Buddhadharma: The Practitioners Quarterly*, *Tricycle: The Buddhist Quarterly*, the *Shambhala Sun*, *Turning Wheel: Journal of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship*, and many publications of individual Buddhist centers. Additionally, the useful and productive development of the Internet has allowed American Buddhism to expand its sphere of influence to a *sangha* not necessarily limited to a given geographic space. The electronic *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, for example, in its "Global Resources for Buddhist Studies" component, has created links to literally hundreds of American Buddhist *sanghas* across the totality of North America, as has the resource of the Australian-based Buddha Dharma Education Association: www.buddhanet.net.

Equally, one cannot dismiss the role that the media has played in the development of the growing American Buddhist tradition. Most of this new public attention began with the decade of the 1990s. Between the months of June and November 1994, features on American Buddhism appeared in such popular print media as *The Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Newsweek*, *New York Magazine*, and *Christianity Today*. The *Newsweek* article, titled, "800,000 Hands Clapping" (Adler 1994), focused on a varied group of American Buddhists that included John Daido Loori, the abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery in upstate New York, well-known actor Richard Gere, Mitchell Kapor of Lotus Development Corporation, Phil Jackson, coach of the world champion Chicago Bulls professional basketball team, and even The Beastie Boys rock group, who recorded "The Bodhisattva Vow," a rap tribute to the Buddhist path. *New York Magazine* (Dinkel 1994) went even farther, categorizing

American Buddhists into "Beat Buddhists" (such as Gary Snyder, Allen Ginsberg, Philip Whalen, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti), "Celluloid Buddhists" (including Willem Dafoe, Oliver Stone, and Ellen Burstyn, along with Gere), "Art Buddhists" (Milton Glaser, Robert Moscowitz, Roy Lichtenstein, and Robert Rauschenberg, among others), "Power Buddhists" (Jerry Brown), and "Benefit Buddhists" (like Porter McCray and Bokara Legendre).

Also in 1994, American Buddhism was presented as a major feature on the "ABC Nightly News with Peter Jennings" (with scholar-practitioners Robert Thurman and Charles Prebish serving as scholarly consultants), as well as on "Talk of the Nation" on National Public radio (with Helen Tworkov and Kenneth Tanaka fielding questions from a national audience). Peter Jennings's researchers estimated the American Buddhist population at that time to be between four and six million individuals, composed of both Asian American and Euro-American ethnic groups, making American Buddhism a religious movement significantly larger than many Protestant denominations.

The flurry of national media attention devoted to American Buddhism has continued almost non-stop since. And it's expanding. As a result, this spate of media stories related to the growth and development of the American Buddhist community begs for a careful delineation and discussion of the major issues that have shaped that very tradition.

DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES IN AMERICAN BUDDHISM

Outlining the historical details of the Buddhist movement in America tells but a small part of the story, for the growth of American Buddhism is far more than its history. Rather, it presents a struggle to acculturate and accommodate on the part of a religious tradition that initially appeared to be wholly foreign to the American mindset. It is important to realize that two different groups were primarily responsible for Buddhism's earliest growth in America. On the one hand, Buddhism is the native religion of a significant number of Asian immigrants. On the other hand, it became the religion, or at least the subject of serious personal interest, for an ever-increasing group of American converts who embraced Buddhism primarily out of intellectual attraction and interest in spiritual practice. This latter circumstance has created its own Buddhist subculture that is literate, urban, upwardly mobile, perhaps even elite in its life orientation. The above bifurcation makes even the issue of Buddhist identity and membership a very murky problem, further exacerbated by confusion about various Buddhist positions on ethical issues, sexuality, gender roles, and the like. This developmental pattern, and the issues associated with it, need to be explored.

In her 1976 volume *Buddhism in America*, Emma Layman devoted an entire chapter to the question "Who are the American Buddhists?" (251–63). She considered how many Buddhists there are in America, its geographic diffusion, the personal characteristics of Buddhists in America, their educational and occupational status, their "personality factors," American versus Asian Buddhists and, in the case of converts, their previous religious affiliation. What she did not consider was precisely how one determines who is an American Buddhist. Three years later, in *American Buddhism*, I suggested that one of the traditional ways of identifying Buddhists in Asian countries – taking refuge – was perhaps an insufficient and even misleading approach when applied to the American scene. My solution in 1979 (187–88) was regarded as highly controversial at best, and obviously incorrect at worst. I suggested that if we define a Buddhist as someone who says "I am a Buddhist," when questioned about "his most important pursuit," we not only abandon our attachment

to a ritual formulary (i.e., the three refuges) that is neither workable nor widely followed, but we also provide more than a modicum of freedom for the American Buddhist groups – a freedom in which they can develop a procedure that is consistent with their own self-image and mission. In other words, what appears initially as an outrageous definition of Buddhist affiliation serves the double purpose of providing a new standard and a simple method of professing Buddhist commitment while at the same time imposing a renewed sense of seriousness on all Buddhist groups. Over the past thirty years, this notion of "self-identification," as it has come to be known, has become the standard mode of verifying Buddhist identity in America. With the issue of "Who is a Buddhist?" clarified, five additional developmental issues frame American Buddhism since 1965: ethnicity, Buddhist practice, democratization, social engagement, and adaptation or acculturation.

The most recent debate about ethnicity in American Buddhism was precipitated by an editorial in *Tricycle: The Buddhist Review* in which Helen Tworkov wrote that most of the spokespeople for Buddhism in America have been almost exclusively well-educated Caucasians, while also suggesting that Asian American Buddhists, despite numbering over a million members, had not contributed significantly to the development of American Buddhism (1991: 4). Her editorial provoked an angry letter of response from Ryo Imamura, an eighteenth-generation Jōdo Shinshū priest, but the letter never appeared in *Tricycle*, although it was later printed in its entirety elsewhere (*The Sangha Newsletter* 1994).

In the aftermath of the above incident, many articles appeared in the popular and scholarly literature addressing the issues of how to speak of the different kinds of Buddhism alluded to above. These articles seem to fall into two camps. The first of these camps emerged in response to and support of my article "Two Buddhisms Reconsidered" (1993: 187–206). I had originally coined the phrase "two Buddhisms" in 1979 to delineate one form of Buddhism that places primary emphasis on sound basic doctrines, shared by all Buddhists, and on solid religious practice, from another which seemed to emerge shortly after radical social movements. At that time, I considered the former group conservative and stable, while I characterized the latter as flashy, opaquely exotic, and hip. In "Two Buddhisms Reconsidered," I redefined the former group as representing the Buddhism practiced by essentially Asian American communities. My intention was to find a way for Asian American immigrant Buddhists and American Buddhist converts (mostly, but not exclusively, of European American descent) to find a respectful and mutually enhancing way of relating, and to find a way for scholars interested in studying these communities to properly and accurately refer to them. I went on to suggest that while generalizations about American Buddhism are probably either impossible or foolish, we might reconsider these "two Buddhisms" in a way that not only added other critical issues into the mix, but also moved beyond the limits of a perhaps restrictive twofold typology. To do that, I utilized Peter Williams' recent book *American Religions: Traditions and Cultures*. Williams identified three categories to describe the way Asian religions impact on America: (1) "ethnic religions" practiced by Asian immigrants and, to an extent, by their descendants; (2) "export religions," popular among well-educated, generally intellectual Americans; and (3) "new religions," developing in consonance with the process outlined by Jacob Needleman and others, often as revolutionary outgrowths of religions cited in the first two categories (Williams 1990: 417).

Shortly thereafter, Jan Nattier published an article in *Tricycle* (1995) that was very explicit and sophisticated in its approach to the varieties of Buddhism in America, and she developed the argument more thoroughly in "Who is a Buddhist? Charting the Landscape

of Buddhist America" (1998: 183–95). Nattier postulated a threefold typology explaining how religions move into new locations and cultures, consisting of (in her characterization):

1   Import religion – a "demand-driven transmission" in which a religion is sought out in an active fashion by the recipient. With specificity for Buddhism, this is labeled "Elite Buddhism."
2   Export religion – a missionary-driven transmission, in which individuals encounter Buddhism through the proselytizing effort of a particular Buddhist group. With specificity for Buddhism, this is labeled "Evangelical Buddhism."
3   Baggage religion – the religion of immigrants to North America, but whose motivation for travel was not evangelical. With specificity for Buddhism, this is labeled "Ethnic Buddhism."

The typology conflict between "two Buddhisms" or "three Buddhisms" persisted until Paul Numrich offered a reasonable alternative. His labels identify "Asian immigrants" and "American converts" as the basic two groups in American Buddhism (1996: 64). Further research by other scholars has offered additional subdivisions within these two groups, but this distinction has continued to be useful. Additionally, we will see at the end of this article that more emphasis has now been placed on "hybridity" as perhaps the newest typology for understanding groups within American Buddhism.

There is no disagreement among researchers that Asian immigrant Buddhist communities and American convert communities engage in significantly different expressions of Buddhist practice. The general consensus is that American converts gravitate toward the various meditation traditions, while Asian immigrants maintain practices coincident with ritual activity or Pure Land observance, depending on the nature of the parent tradition of their community. With the exception of those American converts who have taken up the practices of Sōka Gakkai, there is an almost completely exclusive focus upon meditative practices. More than a few observers of the American Buddhist tradition have remarked that American converts treat Buddhism as if it was a "onefold path," focusing only on meditation and little, if anything, else. In a very real sense, the meditation tradition in America continues to be seen as an all-pervasive activity, offering a complete solution to the entire spectrum of life's ills, from getting high without the risks of drugs to finding a way to cultivate peace. It would not be going too far, I think, to suggest that Buddhist meditation, and the tradition associated with it, have become their own subculture; and it is a subculture that has spawned an enormous popular literature.

Yet Buddha spoke of a threefold training that includes not simply spiritual practice, but also the ethical training that supports it and the wisdom that emerges from it. Most often the ethical training is described in terms of the practice of precepts or *śikṣā*. This is significant because precepts are not practiced in a specific, temporally defined portion of one's day. Properly observed, precepts apply to the totality of one's experience. They infuse our lives in every moment. Thus, in the broadest sense, precepts *are* practice in a far more comprehensive fashion than any single spiritual endeavor. Stephen Batchelor is one of the few scholar-practitioners who has come to identify the application of ethics and spiritual practice as interpenetrating, complementary factors. He argues that ethics include values and precepts that impact one's practice significantly (1996: 243). The problem, in general terms, is how Buddhist ethical guidelines can be applied to daily life; and in specific terms, what adaptations must be made to accommodate the experience of Buddhist life in the West.

To sum up: If the American Buddhist tradition is to affirm the suggestion of Batchelor and others that precepts are an integral aspect of Buddhist practice, and of a Buddhist lifestyle that fosters awareness of and respect for all living beings, then a new and modern ethical literature must necessarily be created. However, if that literature is to meaningfully address the conflicts and ambiguities that result from colliding with a modern world that the earliest tradition never imagined, and engaging that confrontation in a fashion that is truly transcultural and transnational, then it is essential for that new literature to reflect an American Buddhist ethics that is both current and textually supported.

While Asian Buddhism was, for the most part, primarily hierarchical and highly authoritarian, the forms of American Buddhism that are currently developing are clearly undergoing a process of democratization. Unfortunately, and perhaps ironically, this democratization was hastened by a series of scandals that rocked many American Buddhist communities. In an interesting *Time* magazine article about the collective American Buddhist community, David Van Biema noted that many American Buddhist teachers, both Asian and American, had abused their positions by having sexual relations with their disciples (1997: 80). He argued that this circumstance led to an aggressive democratization in many Buddhist communities in which leadership was administratively adjusted so as to prevent further abuse. This radical democratization is being manifested in three essential aspects of American Buddhist communities. First, it can be observed in changing patterns of authority in the various Buddhist *sanghas*, highlighted by a reevaluation of the nature of the relationship between the monastic and lay communities. Second, democratization can be witnessed in changing gender roles in American Buddhism, and especially in the prominence of women. Finally, it can be seen in the manner in which individuals pursuing a nontraditional lifestyle, particularly with regard to sexual preferences, are finding a meaningful role in American Buddhist communities. As a result of this process of democratization, American Buddhism has been able to move away from the hierarchical pattern of Asian Buddhism to the pursuit of an egalitarian approach that is more consistent with American democratic trends.

Studies of the Buddhist monastic tradition in various Asian countries are too plentiful to mention, but nearly all of the books and articles reveal the importance of the monastic unit for the surrounding community and the degree to which its monks and nuns were venerated for their effort, and often for their erudition. In other words, the ideal lifestyle for Buddhist practitioners was that of the monastic. In the United States, however, the monastic lifestyle has never been the ideal. Thus Buddhist community meant *lay* community, and, to a large extent, *city* community. One of the most popular and successful attempts to find a workable alternative to the traditional lay/monastic bifurcation was put into practice at the Zen Center of Los Angeles in which many serious students of Taizan Maezumi Rōshi lived in an intermediate lifestyle, marrying and holding outside jobs while negotiating the full course of training incumbent on a Zen monk. As his Dharma-heirs moved on to begin forming their own Zen communities, many of them have utilized this pattern with much success. In the Theravādin tradition, a similar approach has been identified, noting that a number of lay disciples have taken ordination as an *anagārika*, a celibate path about mid-way between the traditional lay and monastic *sanghas*. Until quite recently, the problem of Buddhist lifestyle and changing patterns of authority was exacerbated by the fact that, unlike its Asian counterpart, American Buddhism was a city movement. The early pattern for American Buddhist communities was to first establish a city center, and then as the center grew and became stable, to develop satellite country centers. To some extent, the members of many

infant American Buddhist city centers communicated more effectively with city-centered members of *other Buddhist sectarian groups* than with country-centered members of *their own community*. Now this is no longer true. The general explosion of information exchange technology and the widespread accessibility of the Internet have changed the shape of how and where American Buddhist communities define themselves and engage in Buddhist practice.

Stories about the Buddha's reluctance to begin an order of nuns are legion in the scholarly literature devoted to the development of the early *sangha*. Although it was pointed out earlier that the monastic tradition represents only a tiny portion of American Buddhist communities, many American Buddhist women see the role of nuns as instrumental in cultivating gender equality in American Buddhism. The degree to which male Buddhist practitioners and teachers welcome such women remains the challenge of changing gender roles in American Buddhism. The growing community of female teachers is significant in that it bridges the gap between the small *sanghas* of monastic members and the overwhelmingly larger number of female lay practitioners in American Buddhism.

Amidst the huge variety of lifestyle choices available in modern America, none are more visible than the nontraditional, alternative sexual preferences of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people. Roger Corless's "Coming Out in the *Sangha*: Queer Community in American Buddhism" creatively explored the existing material, finding scriptural references where he could. He pointed out that since the Monastic Code (*Vinaya*) precepts largely assumed heterosexuality, both homosexuality and homoeroticism were basically ignored. Corless pointed out that now a number of Buddhist groups have emerged that support gay, lesbian, and bisexual Buddhists. In trying to isolate the motives and characteristics of queer Buddhist groups, Corless extracted points from the mission statement of one of these groups, concluding that the main issues include: (1) creating a safe environment in which to practice; (2) creating an environment in which practitioners of various Buddhist paths can meet, share viewpoints, and be mutually supportive; (3) providing a community that is socially and psychologically supportive; (4) offering compassion through social action; and (5) offering a place to explore the degree to which Buddhism does, or does not, meet their spiritual needs (1998: 253–65).

Perhaps the one issue that dominated the early comprehensive books on American Buddhism was *adaptation*, or as it is sometimes referred to, acculturation or Americanization. The underlying issue is questioning whether we were witnessing Asian Buddhism transplanted onto (but not necessarily into) American soil, or whether we have a new cultural amalgam that we should properly identify as "American Buddhism." During the fall of 1994, the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley sponsored an ongoing lecture series entitled "Buddhisms in America: An Expanding Frontier." Most of the papers from this series were collected into the book that was eventually called *The Faces of Buddhism in America*. Why was there a switch in title on the path from conference to book? Presumably, it was more effective to present American Buddhism as one whole with many faces than many American Buddhisms celebrating their diversity together. In his treatment of adaptation in the "Epilogue" to *The Faces of Buddhism in America*, Kenneth Tanaka acknowledged that in some cases the qualities of American individualism and secularism can give rise to a sense of impatience with, and possibly even arrogance toward, ancient forms of Buddhism. Nonetheless, he tried to interpret this inclination in a positive way. In so doing, he suggested that the urgency for aggressive adaptation has fostered what he calls "diffuse affiliation" and "eclectic tendencies" in American Buddhism. Diffuse affiliation

suggests that individuals may have association with a variety of Buddhist forms in their religious quest. As such, not only may the current affiliation of an individual not necessarily be their final affiliation, but an individual may also maintain concurrent affiliation with more than one Buddhist organization. Diffuse affiliation is also witnessed among American Dharma teachers who have received training authorization in more than one tradition. The most publicized expression of diffuse affiliation, as Tanaka (1998) pointed out, is Rodger Kamenetz's book *The Jew in the Lotus*, in which he coined the term "JUBU" for referring to individuals holding a Jewish-Buddhist dual affiliation. Eclectic tendencies refer to such accommodations as Seung Sahn's blending of Zen with Korean folk Buddhism, or in a more extreme example, the practice of some insight meditation (*vipassanā*) teachers of claiming no association with the Theravāda tradition or even with Buddhism.

We have seen that American Buddhism has grown within a developmental framework in which the serious issues of ethnicity, practice, democratization, engagement, and adaptation have necessitated a careful self-examination on the part of individual Buddhist communities. Resulting from that self-reflection is the generally accepted notion than an internal American Buddhist ecumenicity is now required for the continued harmonious growth of the tradition on American soil. Thus, as noted above, the "Conference on World Buddhism in North America" was sponsored by the Zen Lotus Society in Ann Arbor, Michigan on July 10–17, 1987. Conceived by Ven. Samu Sunim, and with ample assistance from Professor Luis Gómez (who served as co-coordinator), a wide variety of talks, panel discussions, and meetings were held in an effort to bring together representatives of the Buddhist traditions in America to work together toward common goals. As also noted above, the conference developed a carefully conceived "Statement of Consensus" for implementation. More than twenty years later, Lama Surya Das, who was closing speaker at the "Buddhism in America Conference" held in Boston on January 17–19, 1997, emphasized that American Buddhism must be ecumenical in the future. The underlying assumption seems to be the hope that an ecumenical attitude, implemented in the proper way, will function as a protective umbrella under which the issues of ethnicity, practice, democratization, engagement, and adaptation may be addressed in a constructive and productive fashion.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE *CYBERSANGHA*

In the earliest general, comprehensive books on Buddhism in America, not a single word was written about the role of computer technology in the development of American Buddhism. The earliest formal interest in the application of computer technology to Buddhism seems to have occurred when the International Association of Buddhist Studies formed a "Committee on Buddhist Studies and Computers" at its 1983 meeting in Tokyo.

Early in the 1990s, a profusion of online discussion forums (or "e–mail discussion lists") began to proliferate and thrive on the Internet. Although these forums were global in scope, the vast majority of subscribers and participants were from North America. Now these discussion forums are too numerous to list, and many are sponsored by individual American Buddhist *sanghas* as a means to maintain continuous, ongoing communication among community members irrespective of where they may reside. New terminology developed to capture the essence and function of these computer-based means of communication. One of the earliest pioneers of Buddhist online communication, Gary Ray, coined the catchy phrase "*cybersangha*" in 1991 to depict the bevy of online communities that were appearing. With the creation and expansion of the World Wide Web (or WWW) and the increasingly

sophisticated technology that has accompanied it, there seems no limit to the expansive means of communication available to American Buddhists. Many, if not most, American Buddhist communities now have individual web sites on the World Wide Web, informing members of various aspects of the community's functions, but also serving as clever advertising occasions for new potential members.

At the far extreme of the technological revolution are an increasing number of Buddhist communities that exist *only* in cyberspace, with no geographic component in real space. Some of these *cybersanghas* have had real impact for individuals who are geographically isolated from communities that exist in real space. On the one hand, it is possible to see technology and the *cybersangha* as the completion of the traditional Buddhist "*sangha* of the four quarters." On the other hand, it is possible to see this new development in American Buddhist communication as a true sign of the cold, rational, contemporary world in which communication is faceless and even impersonal.

THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN BUDDHISM

On January 17–19, 1997 a "Buddhism in America Conference" was held at the Boston Park Plaza Hotel. The promotional brochure distributed by the conference's producer, Al Rapaport, subtitled the event: "A Landmark Conference on the Future of Buddhist Meditative Practices in the West." In addition to the various keynote addresses, pre-conference workshops, and panels, there was a cornucopia of American Buddhist activities available for all to experience. Throughout the weekend, the Drepung Loseling Tibetan monks were creating a Medicine Buddha Sand Mandala, and on Saturday evening, nine lamas from the Drepung Loseling monastery performed their world-famous multiphonic singing. There were almost two dozen commercial exhibitors, consisting of booksellers, distributors of Dharma-ware, and other Buddhist items. On the last night of the conference, Lama Surya Das, an American convert Buddhist (originally born as Jeffrey Miller) and founder of the Dzogchen Foundation in Cambridge, Massachusetts, gave the final presentation. He offered ten points that he believed would characterize the American Buddhism of the future (Prebish 1999: 264–65). These included:

1   *Dharma* without dogma. Like other speakers before him (most notably Stephen Batchelor), he argued for a "Buddhism without belief."
2   A lay-oriented *sangha*. He acknowledged and supported the notion of *three* communities in American Buddhism: the traditional monastic *sangha*, the lay *sangha*, and what he referred to as "the in-between *sangha*," with the latter reflecting the attempts by many men and women to maintain a monastic-oriented lifestyle while maintaining traditional family life.
3   A meditation-based and experiential tradition. He contrasted this feature against a study-based or academic Buddhism. There was no mention of nonmeditational practices, such as those utilized by the Pure Land tradition, or by Sōka Gakkai.
4   Gender equality. Surya Das noted that half of the Buddhist teachers in the West are women and that the American *Dharma* should be an equal-opportunity enterprise.
5   A non-sectarian tradition. Surya Das stressed that the developing American Buddhism of the next century must be eclectic, ecumenical, and utterly equal.
6   An essentialized and simplified tradition. Here he maintained that American Buddhism needs to be "de-mystified" and bypass technical jargon and foreign terminology. In

reshaping the Dharma for the West, however, he also underscored the avoidance of "New Age" and pop psychology.

7   An egalitarian, democratic, and nonhierarchical tradition. The chief emphasis in this point was Surya Das' insistence that American Buddhism not be class-oriented or theocratic. He argued for supporting noninstitutionalized forms of American Buddhism.

8   A psychologically astute and rational tradition. Perhaps in an attempt to expand and clarify point 3 above, he restated his insistence on a practice-based American Buddhism, but here included faith and devotional practices as well. But he also argued for the tradition to be skeptical, practical, and inquiring. Nonetheless, he concluded this point by advocating self-help as a primary aspect of American Buddhism.

9   An experimental, innovating, inquiry-based tradition. Surya Das wants American Buddhism to be forward-looking rather than preservationist. He argued aggressively against preserving old wine in new bottles. Of special interest was his observation that we are now experiencing the "third wave" of teachers: Western teachers trained by *Western teachers*.

10 A socially informed and engaged tradition. As his final point, he accentuated an integrative rather than reclusive American Buddhism in which family life is included as part of the spiritual path. He further indicated the importance of hospice work, ethics and right livelihood, deep ecology, the performing arts, sports, social service, and interfaith dialogue as critical features of the socially engaged Buddhism of the future.

Surya Das closed the conference by inviting the entire audience to chant with him, perhaps a fitting way to bring everyone together into a practice that reflected the points he emphasized in his presentation.

In reviewing the forward-looking suggestions of Surya Das and other researchers, it is possible to isolate a number of common, internal variables in the American Buddhist movement, and there is virtually unanimous agreement among these researchers that the development of American Buddhism in the current century will depend on the unfolding of these internal variables. Broadly defined, they include the nature and definition of the *sangha*, democratization within the entire tradition, ethnicity, gender equality, practice orientation, social engagement, and sectarian issues as the challenges of the future. Although there seems little doubt that American Buddhism will continue to be a mostly lay-oriented movement, more and more successful monastic communities are beginning to appear on the landscape that provide various kinds of monastic living experiences for members of the American Buddhist *sangha*. Contextually, it is within the expanding inclusiveness of the American *sangha* that new and evolving experiments in self-governance are emerging that provide exciting possibilities for American Buddhists living in both urban and rural settings. Further, these attempts at a rationally conceived democratization of the *sangha* include thoughtful considerations of how to successfully implement gender equality, respect for the full spectrum of Buddhist practices and practitioners within both the Asian immigrant and American convert communities, and a keen awareness that social engagement is the most profound expression of Buddhism's life-affirming attitude possible. Nurtured in an environment of concern for a proper application of Buddhist ethics, implemented in a modern and global Buddhist community, and with a renewed sense of inquiry into the nature, quality, and requirements of spiritual authority, the above factors provide the American Buddhism of the next millennium with an active and positive agenda.

Nonetheless, in each of the above topics, there is a host of variables that will act and react in an interdependent fashion yielding an almost endless set of possible permutations for the future of American Buddhism. In addition to these internal variables, there are many external ones as well, relating to the changing face of American religious life. Further, there has been the development of a growing ecumenical Buddhism, and with it a new sense of global identity. The importance of the development of an ecumenical American Buddhism cannot be stressed strongly enough, for it provides perhaps the best potential for American Buddhist unity in the current century. In other words, in looking for innovative and creative methodologies for successfully negotiating the future, American Buddhism and American Buddhists might well look beyond the North American borders and learn from the experiences of other Western Buddhists.

The importance of the American Buddhist movement can easily be seen in its rapidly growing numbers. From no more than 100,000 Buddhists in the 1960s, the tradition has grown to likely 6 million Buddhists in North America today. As a testament to its importance on the American religious scene, the American Academy of Religion authorized the creation of a new unit in its organization called the "Buddhism in the West" consultation. This will allow for papers to be presented at the organization's annual meeting. Headed by an adventurous young scholar named Jeff Wilson, this unit, and the scholars who support it, will bring forth the next generation of scholarship on American Buddhism. Most likely new typologies will deconstruct or even replace the old, focusing not on the "Two Buddhisms" or "Three Lines of Transmission" outlined above, but rather on an American Buddhism of hybridity, a mixing of traditions, and an interreligious dialogue that will move the entire tradition forward. In so doing, the coming years in the development of American Buddhism may exhibit a genuine interest in the American Buddhist ecumenism mentioned above; one in which Buddhists from each of the "vehicles" and cultures will communicate openly and meaningfully.

NOTE

1   This study focuses solely on the United States. For information on Buddhism in Canada, refer to those volumes listed in the Bibliography for this chapter.

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THE RELIGIO-PHILOSOPHICAL
BUDDHIST WORLD

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ABHIDHARMA

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Joseph Walser

INTRODUCTION

*A*bhidharma is a designation of Buddhist literature in which the core teachings from the Buddha's sermons are systematized, interpreted, and defended. Ideally, abhidharma texts form the third "Basket" (*piṭaka*) of the Buddhist "Three Baskets" (*Tripiṭaka*) or canon, but many *sūtra* texts (discourses attributed to the Buddha) and post-canonical works share important features with the treatises comprising the *Abhidharmapiṭaka*. It will be useful, then, to make a distinction between canonical abhidharma texts (i.e., those that comprise the *Abhidharmapiṭaka*) and works not included in the *piṭaka* but sharing important features with and developing the ideas of canonical abhidharma texts. The latter may usefully be referred to as abhidharma as well, even though it is technically not part of the *Abhidharmapiṭaka*. Abhidharma literature comprising this category displays considerable variation as to genre. The treatises range from simple commentaries on, or indexes to, the Buddha's sermons (e.g., the *Dharmaskandha*, *Mahāniddesa*), to sectarian debate manuals (e.g. *Kathāvatthu*, *Vijñānakāya*), to works meant to be comprehensive of all Buddhist doctrine (e.g., *Abhidharmakośa*, *Abhidhammathasaṅgaha*), to shorter discussions of specific topics (e.g., *Lokaprajñāpti*, *Puggalapaññati*). The lasting significance of abhidharma as a genre lies in its innovations to and systemizations of the basic Buddhist doctrines found in the *Sūtrapiṭaka*. As such, abhidharma compositions became a critical component in the formation of early Buddhist sectarian identity.

After a brief discussion of the meaning of the term "abhidharma," I will discuss the chronology of the abhidharma collections of the different Buddhist sects. Against this backdrop, I will then trace the development of two key philosophical concerns of abhidharma: taxonomy and ontology.

THE MEANING OF THE TERM

The meaning of the term "abhidharma" has been subjected to considerable discussion in abhidharma literature (see, e.g., Taishō 1545: 1a8–3b22). On the most fundamental level, abhidharma consists of the word "*dharma*" (a notoriously difficult word to define, but one that seems to span the English words "teaching," "truth," and "real thing") onto which the

prefix *abhi-* has been attached. It is the prefix that has caused the most problems in defining abhidharma. According to Monier-Williams, the prefix *abhi-* when attached to a noun not derived from a verb means it "expresses something like superiority or intensity" Monier-Williams 1982, *s.v.*). Scholars seem to be divided between translating it as "concerning the dharma," and "the higher dharma." For our purposes, it will be most useful to think of *dharma* as the teaching of the Buddha contained in the *Sūtrapiṭaka* and *Vinayapiṭaka* and abhidharma as a kind of "meta-*dharma*" or the distilled essence of that *dharma*. Here we can find a nice parallel between the *Abhidharmapiṭaka* that extracts the topical lists (*mātṛkā*) from the *Sūtrapiṭaka* and the term *abhivinaya*, used in the various *vinayas* in reference to the list of *Prātimokṣa* rules extracted from the *Vinayavibhaṅga* (see La Vallée Poussin 1988, vol. 1: xxx–xxxiv; Walser 2005: 128–29).

CHRONOLOGY

Scholars are generally agreed on a relative chronology for abhidharma texts, even if assigning absolute dates to any of them is highly problematic. In brief, the composition of abhidharma literature falls into four periods (see Willemen *et al.* 1998: 173–74). The first period consists of those works that are closely tied to specific *sūtras* (indeed, some, like the *Saṅgīti Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, are actually included in the *Sūtrapiṭaka* itself), culling lists of doctrines from those *sūtras* with minimal commentary. These texts may or may not be written in *sūtra* format themselves. The second-period texts consist of lists of topics (*mātṛka*) that are no longer explicitly referenced to specific *sūtras*. During this period lists are cross-referenced against other lists, the combinatorics of which account for the bulk of many of the works belonging to this period. As abhidharma texts become more established as an independent genre, we find abhidharma treatises introducing new technical terms and new articulations of practice. Concomitant with doctrinal innovations, there arose doctrinal disagreements. It is in abhidharma literature of this period that we find the beginnings of sectarian consciousness. The third period comprises texts displaying full-blown sectarianism (see the chapter by Gray in this volume for a discussion of sectarianism). Important texts of this period attempt to encompass the abhidharma teachings of the second period while defending their innovations against challenges raised by other sects. Finally, the fourth period consists of post-canonical digests of or commentaries on third period texts, often with heightened sectarian rhetoric.

Though there are presumably many abhidharma texts that are no longer extant, there is evidence that the following sects had at least one freestanding abhidharma or abhidharma-like text if not an entire collection: Theravāda, Sarvāstivāda, Dharmagupta, Haimavata, Mahāsaṅghika, Saṃmitīya, Vatsīputrīya and Bāhuśrutīya, and Gokulika/Kukkutika. Turning to the archaeological record, abhidharma manuscripts seem to predominate in Kuṣaṇa Era find-spots on the Silk Route (Sander 1991: 147–48). Since these sites are either Sarvāstivādin or Dharmagupta, we can surmise that the use of abhidharma materials was an important part of the everyday curriculum for those sects in that area.

THE STATUS OF ABHIDHARMA

As abhidharma literature developed into a genre distinct from the *sūtra* genre, its status became a matter of some debate. By the second period mentioned above, some sects of Indian Buddhism formed abhidharma collections distinct from *sūtra* and *vinaya* collections.

It also appears that some were not comfortable with the innovations introduced in abhidharma texts. By the time of the *Abhidharmakośa* (fourth or fifth century), there were some within the Sarvāstivādin sect who were designated as "Sautrāntikas" or "those who only follow the *sūtra*." (For some of the modern debates over the significance of this term, see Cox 1995: 38–9.) Similar tendencies can be found in Skandhila's (ca. fifth century) *Abhidharmāvatāra*, where the author explicitly renounces the "method of questions and answers," i.e., the catechetical style characteristic of abhidharma treatises (Willemen *et al.* 1998: 284–5). For these Sautrāntikas, the word "abhidharma" simply referred to certain kinds of texts within the *Sūtrapiṭaka* itself and was not an independent collection of texts (we find the same thing in the *Mahāsaṃghika Vinaya*, Walser 2005). At the other extreme were the Gokūlikas or Kukkutika who, according to Paramārtha (499–569), went so far as to declare that the *Tripiṭaka* denotes the *Abhidharmapiṭaka* alone, and not the *Sūtrapiṭaka* or the *Vinayapiṭaka* (Bareau 1955: 79).

ABHIDHARMA COLLECTIONS

Despite the relatively large number of schools reported to have had abhidharma collections, there are only two complete *Abhidharmapiṭakas* extant and only a handful of abhidharma-style treatises belonging to other sects. In addition, there are fragments of abhidharma manuscripts that have been found that have no known corresponding text in any existing collection. The two complete collections are those of the Theravādins, who predominate in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, and the Sarvāstivādins who were prevalent in Northern India and on the Silk Route.

THERAVĀDA ABHIDHAMMA

The Theravāda *Abhidharmapiṭaka* consists of seven main texts. The ideas of these works are clarified and expanded in important ways by later commentaries, i.e., the *aṭṭhakathā*, and the *mūla-* and *anuṭīkā* commentaries and a handful of "extra-canonical" or "para-canonical" treatises. The seven texts of the *Abhidhammapiṭaka* are: the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*, *Vibhaṅga*, *Dhātukathā*, *Puggalapaññatti*, *Kathāvatthu*, *Yamaka*, and *Paṭṭhāna*. As to the relative dates of these books, Robert Buswell and Padmanabh Jaini place the *Puggalapaññatti* and parts of the *Dhammasaṅgaṇi* and the *Vibhaṅga* in the earliest stage, the *Dhātukathā* and *Katthāvatthu* in the second period, and they put the *Yamaka* and *Paṭṭhāna* toward the end of the composition of the canonical seven texts (Buswell and Jaini 1996: 90–91).

Later post-canonical treatises include the *Peṭakopadesa* (parts of which are preserved in Chinese; see Zacchetti 2002), *Nettippakaraṇa*, *Paṭisaṃbhidhāmagga*, and *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*. Although not considered abhidharma texts per se, Upatissa's (ca. first–second centuries) *Vimuttimagga* and Buddhaghosa's (ca. fifth century) *Visuddhimagga* develop many of the themes of early canonical abhidharma texts and hence are relevant to any discussion of abhidharma. There is some controversy regarding the former of these two, since many scholars have assigned the *Vimuttimagga* (preserved in Chinese with fragments in Tibetan) to the Abhayagiri *vihāra* Theravādins, a renegade branch that became extinct in the twelfth century. This attribution has been roundly criticized (Crosby 1999).

SARVĀSTIVĀDA

The Sarvāstivādins also claimed seven texts to be authoritative: the *Jñānaprasthāna* (alt. *Aṣṭhagrantha*), *Prakaraṇapāda*, *Vijñānakāya*, *Dharmaskandha*, *Prajñaptibhāṣya*, *Dhātukāya*, *Saṅgītiparyāya*. Although the traditional ordering of the core seven texts places the *Jñānaprasthāna* first, modern scholars place it last, dividing the development of the tradition into three phases as well. Ryogon Fukuhara places the *Saṅgītiparyāya* and *Dharmaskandha* in the earliest group, the *Prajñaptibhāṣya*, *Dhātukāya*, and *Vijñānakāya*, and *Prakaraṇapāda* in the second, and finally the *Jñānaprasthāna* in the third (Buswell and Jaini 1996: 102).

While generally treatises of the fourth period come later than these core seven, there are two exceptions. Erich Frauwallner (1995: 152) and Bart Dessein (1996: 647) have both made a case that the *Abhidharmāmṛta* (aka. *Abhidharmasāra*) by Dharmaśrī (ca. second century) and the anonymous *Pañcaskandhaka* predate the *Jñānaprasthāna*.

At the time of the composition of the *Jñānaprasthāna* and *Aṣṭhagrantha*, a regional division arose from within the Sarvāstivāda sect, and this division is reflected in its post-canonical abhidharma literature. While there is no indication that there was actually a schism within Sarvāstivāda at this time, there was definitely some tension on a number of doctrinal points. These issues appear to have fallen along a regional divide. Representing the masters of Kaśmīr are the *Vibhāṣa* and its commentaries. Kaśmīri Sarvāstivādins are subsequently known as "Vaibhāṣikas" or "those who follow the *Vibhāṣa*." There are three such *Vibhāṣa* extant in Chinese translation, with many others reputed to have existed (for a summary discussion of the work that has been done on the different versions, see Willemen *et al.* 1998: 233–37). According to a legend contained in the *Vibhāṣa* commentary itself, the *Vibhāṣa* was compiled at a council convened by the Kuṣāna king Kaniṣka ca. second century – although by the testimony of one of the extant versions, Kaniṣka was already dead at the time of the composition of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* (see Willemen *et al.* 1998: 116–19; 232). In addition to the *Vibhāṣa* commentaries, there exist two shorter texts from this period reflecting Vaibhāṣika predilections, namely: the *Ārya Vasumitra Bodhisattva Saṅgīti Śāstra* (Taishō 1549) and the *Pañca Vastuka Vibhāṣā Śāstra* (Taishō 1555 and 1557).

The other side of the divide was represented by masters from Gandhāra, whose representative texts were Dharmaśreṣṭhin's (alt. Dharmaśrī's; fl. early thirty century) *Abhidharmahṛdāya*, the *Saṃyuktābhidharmahṛdaya*, and the *Abhidharmahṛdayaśāstra* by Dharmatrāta (ca. fourth century). In the fourth or the fifth century, Vasubandhu championed the cause and wrote a sharp criticism of Vaibhāṣika tenets entitled the *Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*. The latter was in turn attacked by the Vaibhāṣika Saṅghabhadra (fourth–fifth centuries) in his *Nyāyānusāra* and *Abhidharmasamayapradīpikā* and by the anonymously penned (also Vaibhāṣika) *Abhidharmadīpa*. Other texts of "Western masters" include the *Abhidharmāmṛtarasa* by Ghoṣaka (ca. second century), the *Abhidharmāvatara* by Skandhila, the *Abhidharmakośasphuṭārtha* by Yaśomitra (fl. early eighth century), and the *Tattvārtha* of Sthiramati (ca. sixth century). The last two of these are commentaries on Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya*. There does not appear to be any one issue that divided the two camps, but rather a host of smaller technical points. If one were to attempt to summarize the disagreement between the Vaibhasikas and the Western Masters from what Vasubandhu has to say about both sides it would be that the Western Masters thought that the Vaibhāṣikas had taken too many liberties in postulating *dharmas* not explicitly mentioned in scripture.

OTHER ABHIDHARMA TEXTS AND
MAHĀYĀNA ABHIDHARMA TEXTS

In addition to the two collections of the Theravādins and the Sarvāstivādins, there are a number of independent works that originally may have been part of an *Abhidharmapiṭaka* of one of the other sects. From the Pudgalavādin sects we have three texts that exist only in Chinese translation. The first two are the (*Sanfadulun* 三法度論, Taishō 1506 = *Tridharmakaśāstra*) and the (*Si-ahanmuchaoxu* 四阿鋡暮抄解, Taishō 1505). These are really two different versions of the same text, since the latter contains the former title in its last line (Chau 1999: 19). The third is the (*Sanmidibulun* 三彌底部論, Taishō 1649 = *Sāmmitīyanikāyaśāstra*). These texts have been largely neglected in modern scholarship. However, two important studies of this material have been made by Thich Tien Chau (1999) and Leonard Priestley (1999). Other important abhidharma texts include the *Śāriputrābhidharma* (Taishō 1548), an early text usually ascribed to the Dharmagupta sect, and the *Satyasiddhiśāstra* by Harivarman (ca. seventh century) – a Bāhuśrutīya (Taishō 1646).

The issue of Mahāyāna abhidharma is more complex than might appear. There is one text that is often referred to as a Mahāyāna abhidharma text: the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (or "*Summary of Abhidharma*") ascribed to Asaṅga (ca. fourth century). The problem becomes more difficult when we pursue the issue further. On the one hand, there is some evidence that there were Mahāyāna abhidharma texts that are no longer extant. For instance, Xuanzang's 玄奘 (602–64) translation of the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* begins with a quotation from a text referred to as the "*Abhidharmamahāyāna Sūtra*" (Lamotte 1973: 1) in which ten doctrines unique to Mahāyāna are listed. However, Paramārtha's translation of the same text claims that the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* itself is a text "of the doctrines of the abhidharma and the Mahāyāna *sūtras*" (ibid., n. 1). Beyond the obvious textual issues, the *Mahāyānasaṃgraha* raises important questions about the very natures of abhidharma and Mahāyāna themselves. The *Mahāyānasaṃgraha*, like many Mahāyāna treatises of that period, shares certain characteristics of abhidharma texts even if it did not self-identify as abhidharma. We can easily identify abhidharma works of the Theravādins and the Sarvāstivādins because both of these sects maintained a fixed abhidharma canon. Mahāyānists were probably never in a position to declare a closed canon of abhidharma works for themselves. All we have to go on is the style of Mahāyāna works. The *Abhidharmasammuccaya* clearly shares the same concerns, themes, and even some of the structure of abhidharma works of other sects. But this is true of even some early Mahāyāna works. For instance, Yogācāra treatises such as the *Yogācārabhūmi* read very much like classical abhidharma texts such as the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* despite the fact that the *Yogācārabhūmi* never uses the word abhidharma to describe itself ("*yogācārabhūmi*" was probably a genre of its own, though whether or not it was considered to be different from abhidharma is not known). In short, although Mahāyāna texts may not self-identify as abhidharma texts, this does not mean that they do not borrow from or contribute to that genre.

Indeed, not enough work has been done on the relationship between Mahāyāna texts and their abhidharma contemporaries. On the one hand, many supposedly Mahāyāna doctrines can be found in early abhidharma works with no indication that they belong to Mahāyāna. For example, the *Mahāvibhāṣa* discusses the arising of the "mind of awakening" (*bodhicitta*) at the beginning of the path to awakening (Buswell 1997a: 592), and the *Abhidharmadīpa* even states that "there are some who have settled their minds outside the word of the Buddha

who say: 'The bodhisattva path to (becoming a) Bhagavat is not taught in the *Tripiṭaka*.' That one is to be told, 'Now you are confused'" (Jaini 1977: 195). On the other hand, many of the supposedly signature doctrines of Mahāyānists, such as the doctrine that all *dharma*s lack essence (*svabhāva*), only make sense against the background of abhidharma developments in ontology.

ABHIDHARMA INNOVATIONS

It is in the second period of development that we find the beginnings of abhidharma contributions to Buddhist thought. *Abhidharma* writers were responsible for important developments in Buddhist taxonomy, ontology, and soteriology. To give the reader a sense of these innovations I will focus on innovations in these areas.

Dharma Taxonomies

Defining the term "*dharma*" in Buddhism is a notoriously difficult task. For the sake of simplicity, there are two definitions of the term that are important in order to understand abhidharma. The first is *dharma* as "teaching" or "truth" (assuming here that what the Buddha taught was the truth). The second is *dharma* as that thing which is real. In abhidharma literature these two senses are connected. Early abhidharma texts lift the categorical lists of items taught in the Buddha's sermons and arrange and rearrange them in texts independent of their original context. The truths so extracted are called *dharmas*.

The first innovation that stands out is the development of abhidharma categories from simple topical indexes of the Buddha's sermons into comprehensive taxonomies of the *dharmas* contained therein. For example, the Four Noble Truths comprise the truths (suffering, arising, cessation, and path) taught by the Buddha during his first sermon in the Deer Park at Varanasi. These Four Truths are indexed in the *Saṅgīti Sutta*, with no further comment. In later abhidharma, this set of four becomes the organizing principle of the *Satyasiddhiśāstra* – a scheme under which it classifies all other Buddhist doctrines. By the same token, Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* and Upatissa's *Vimuttimagga* take the "three trainings" (*triśaikṣā*) of morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*) found throughout the *Sūtrapiṭaka* and the "seven purifications" from the *Majjhima Nikāya's Rathavinīta Sutta* as overarching categories under which all Buddhist teachings are arranged.

One of the earlier and perhaps most interesting attempts at categorization is evident in the organization of the "*dhātus*" or basic constituents of reality. Here, most Sarvāstivādin texts categorize the *dhātus* under the rubric of either the five aggregates (*pañcaskandha*) or the five topics (*pañcavastu*). Erich Frauwallner (1995: 140–145) argues that in the *Abhidharmasāra* and the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* we see the two schemes contending with one another – the result being a kind of amalgamation of the two schemes.

The five aggregates constitute one of the fundamental lists that pervade the sermons of the Buddha and comprise the basic constituents of sentient beings. These are form (*rūpa*), feelings (*vedanā*), concepts (*saṃjñā*), formations (*saṃskāra*), and consciousnesses (*vijñāna*). In the *Sūtrapiṭaka*, the aggregates are a device used to discuss the makeup of human beings as we find them. As a complete catalog of what comprises the human, the five aggregates are used as an argument against the existence of a soul (*ātman*). Frauwallner argues that the *Abhidharmasāra*'s repurposing the five aggregates into a categorical scheme for all existents, both sentient and nonsentient, was an important innovation in the history

of abhidharma. The change allowed the Buddhist system to extend beyond psychology and soteriology into a comprehensive system of ontology as well.

The problem with the five aggregates serving as the fundamental architectonic for Buddhist ontology is that some very important Buddhist *dharmas* are difficult to place in such a system. The most obvious of these is nirvana itself. Frauwallner points out that there was another, competing categorical scheme predating the *Abhidharmasāra*, the "Five Topics" (*pañcavastu*) represented by a text of the same name (Taishō 1557). The five are: (1) form (*rūpa*); (2) mind (*citta*); (3) mental factors (*caitta* = Pāli *cetasika*); (4) conditioned factors not associated with the mind (*cittaviprayuktasaṃskāra*); and (5) the unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*). The five topics seem to be a reworking the categories of form, mind, and mental factors already found in the *Saṃgīti Sutta*. The *pañcavastuka* scheme, however, includes a place for nirvana under the category of the unconditioned.

Indeed, it seems the core of this architectonic lies in the binary "conditioned"/ "unconditioned" (*saṃskṛta*/*asaṃskṛta*). The first four of the five topics belong to the realm of conditioned things, while the category of unconditioned things comprises items like nirvana that neither arise nor cease. Again, while there are a number of discussions of conditioned and unconditioned *dharma*s in the sermons, the two are not treated as all-encompassing categories in the *Sūtrapiṭaka*. Padmadabh Jaini (1959) has gone to great lengths to demonstrate that these five, and especially the *cittaviprayuktasaṃskāra*, were a kind of Buddhist rejoinder to the six and seven categories (*padārtha*) of the Vaiśeṣikas,[1] even as the latter school's categories would come to be used to refute the five aggregates by the time of Udayāna's (tenth century) *Ātmatattvaviveka*. Where the five aggregates aimed at anthropological completeness, the five topics aim at categorical completeness insofar as nirvana may now be included under the category of the unconditioned. Just as the Vaiśeṣika categories of substance (*dravya*), quality (*guṇa*), and action (karma) form the core of their system of categories, so form (*rūpa*), mind (*citta*) and mental concomitants (*caitta*), and the unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) form the core of the Sarvāstivādin system. Carrying the comparison further, the Vaiśeṣika categories of *sāmānya* (generality), *viśeṣa* (uniqueness), *samavāya* (inherence), and *abhāva* (nonexistence) as separate categories function to deal with specific problems raised by the postulation of the first three categories. By the same token, the category of "formations dissociated from the mind" (*cittaviprayuktasaṃskāra*) comprised a host of new *dharma*s formulated to deal with problems raised by the other categories. According to Buswell (1997b: 452–3), the Sarvāstivādins were well aware that this category was a catch-all for any miscellaneous *dharma*s. He shows that the list of *dharma*s included under this category expanded in the *Vibhāṣa* literature and was simplified in subsequent works like the *Abhidharmakośa* and its successors.

While the first three of these five topics can be seen operating in the *Dharmaskandha* of the Sarvāstivādins, this system only becomes fully developed in the *Prakaraṇapāda* (the *Pañcavastuka* forms the first chapter of the *Prakaraṇapāda*, in addition to having been circulated as an independent text) and from there comes to be an important organizational scheme for the later digests of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* such as the *Abhidharmakośa* and *Abhidharmahṛdayaśāstra* (Ganguly 2002: 73).

While formations dissociated from consciousness as a fundamental category would appear to be peculiar to the Sarvāstivādins, other elements of the *pañcavastuka* classification find parallels in the abhidharma texts of other schools as well. For example, we find four of these five topics implied in the organization of *dharma*s in the Theravādin *Dhammasaṅgaṇi*. An explicit organization of *dharma*s into mind (*citta*), mental concomitants (*cetasika* =

caitta), form (*rūpa*), and nirvana is first explicitly set out in Buddhadatta's *Abhidhammāvatāra* (ca. 450 CE) (Ronkin 2005: 49) and becomes a common organizing principle in later Theravādin abhidharma texts like the *Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha*. Furthermore, as Jaini has shown, quite a number of factors that the Sarvāstivādins classify under *cittaviprayuktasaṃskāra*, the Theravādins classify under "derived matter" (*upādāya-rūpa*) (Jaini 1959: 535). While the *Kathāvatthu* and Yaśomitra ascribe a category of formations dissociated from consciousness to the Pudgalavādins (ibid.), the Pudgalavādins' own texts, on the other hand, parse ontology into five categories: past, future, present, unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*), and ineffable (see e.g., Vasubandhu's discussion in Pradhāna 1975: 237). The first three categories (past things, present things, and future things) include all conditioned entities such as the aggregates (*skandhas*), the elements (*dhātu*), and the sense spheres (*āyatana*). The fourth category is unconditioned things (*asaṃskṛta*). Only nirvana falls into this category. The fifth category is simply called "ineffable" (*avācya*), and it is here that the Pudgalavādins place the *pudgala*, the entity that bears karma from life to life. This fifth category functions as the middle between the usual abhidharma categories of conditioned and unconditioned.

Ontology

The Sarvāstivādin adoption of the fivefold taxonomy of the *Pañcavastuka* was, in all likelihood, a response to the categorization efforts of the Vaiśeṣikas. Entering into the same intellectual milieu as non-Buddhist philosophers was to have other, perhaps even more far-reaching, implications for the development of the concept of "*dharma*" itself. In early Buddhism, *dharma*s probably were considered to be "distinct, but not unrelated to one another; they represent causally significant points within the complex web of experienced activities, but points that can only be determined relationally and that can only be defined dynamically" (Cox 2004: 555). By the time of later works like the *Viṃśatikākārikā-vṛtti* of Vasubandhu, or the *Kṣaṇabhaṅga-siddhiḥ Vyātirekātmika* of Ratnakīrti (eleventh century), *dharma*s are treated as temporally and substantially discrete entities. These later texts treat *dharma*s as existing essentially (*svabhāvatas*), substantially (*dravyatas*), and momentarily (*kṣaṇika*). For later Buddhists, the coming into existence and passing out of existence of *dharma*s are ontologically distinct from one another and yet form a continuous stream (*saṃtāna*) that makes up each personality. This view of *dharma*s as temporally and substantively discrete took a long time to develop and was probably never the univocal position of any Buddhist school.

There are two ways scholars trace the development of the individuation of *dharma*s, and both lead us back to the Vaiśeṣikas. One approach traces the idea of discrete *dharma*s back to the Vaiśeṣika idea of atoms. The *Sūtrapiṭaka* refers often to the "great elements" of earth, air, fire, and water. While these are associated with qualities, such as cohesion, motion, heat, etc., nowhere in the *Sūtrapiṭaka* is there any mention that these elements are atomic. The first hint of atomism in Sarvāstivāda abhidharma occurs in Dharmaśrī's *Abhidharmasāra*. In this work, Dharmaśrī includes a discussion of the elements existing as groups of four atoms, thereby at least making material *dharmas* into discrete existents (Ronkin 2005: 56). Thereafter, discussions of the theory of atoms become a staple in Sarvāstivāda abhidharma, finding a place in the *Mahāvibhāṣa* and the *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* among others. Noa Ronkin finds that the Theravāda tradition comes to the theory of atoms much later: the first work to explicitly mention the theory is the *Abhidhammāvatāra* of Buddhadatta (ca. 450 CE).

Later commentarial literature and the *Visuddhimagga* discuss atoms as existing in "packages" (*kalāpa*), perhaps in response to the Vaiśeṣika notion of groups of atoms, but "only in the period of the sub-commentaries and the medieval manuals did *kalāpa* become the standard term for the collective atom" (see Ronkin 2005: 58).

Collett Cox takes another approach, arguing that the notion of *dharma*s as discretely existing things was a consequence of the adoption of the *Pañcavastuka* taxonomy. One of the early uses of lists of *dharmas* was for the practice of *dharmapravicaya*, or distinguishing of *dharmas*. This practice can be seen in such exercises as the mindfulness of *dharmas* in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. An important part of disambiguating and distinguishing mental components was to determine the category into which a particular factor should be included. Categorical inclusion led Buddhists to shift from talking about the *dharma* (singular) of form to talking about which *dharma*s (plural) are to be included in the category of form. Cox notes that the *Śāriputrābhidharma* was the first abhidharma text to discuss the categorization of *dharmas* (plural). At this point, however, there was no problem maintaining an understanding of *dharma*s as fluid, interrelated categories while still holding no ontological commitment to their ultimate existence. According to Cox, when the categories of formations dissociated from consciousness (*cittaviprayuktasaṃskāra*) and the unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*) were brought into Buddhist taxonomy by way of the *Pañcavastuka*, the emphasis shifted from *dharma analysis* as an experiential practice toward *dharma categorization* aimed at theoretical comprehensiveness. The move away from practice to theory was a function of the fact that the formations dissociated from consciousness and unconditioned categories comprised items that, by definition, could not be directly experienced. The change in theoretical use of the concept of *dharma*s ended up leading to a shift in the very concept of what a *dharma* was.

While noting that there are no definitions of a *dharma per se* in Sarvāstivādin literature until Upaśānta's (ca. third century) and Dharmatrāta's (ca. fourth century) commentaries on the *Abhidharmahṛdaya*, Cox (2004: 558) shows that it is in the *Mahāvibhāṣa*'s discussions of unconditioned *dharma*s categorization based on substance (*dravya*) and nature (*svabhāva*) become standard for the school. One needs to be exceedingly careful, however, in the interpretation of the latter terms. While it is tempting to always read the term "*svabhāva*" through a Mahāyāna (or more specifically a *Perfection of Wisdom*) lens as an indication of reified or concrete existence, Cox argues that the terms *svabhāva*, *bhāva*, *dravya*, and *svalakṣaṇa* were originally used epistemologically as indicators of class inclusion and took on ontological significance in the *Mahāvibhāṣa* only by a kind of logical extension (Cox 2004: 562–63).

For example, it is the essential nature of fire to combust. Stated more broadly, in any possible world (past, present, future, Mars, Narnia, etc.) if something is fire, it will burn something. Hence, combustion will always and in every case be included in the category of fire. This makes the category eternal insofar as its class inclusion is an atemporal fact. The necessity of class inclusion leads the Sarvāstivādins in the direction of (one of the first?) properly ontological statements about *dharma*s. The *Vijñānakāya* opens with the doctrine from which the Sarvāstivādin school derives its name, namely: that past, present, and future exist. Here, the argument requires more than a mere categorical existence of past, present, and future entities since the argument rests on the assumption that any cognition requires an existent object (*ālambana*). For instance, desire exists and must have an object that is desired. Yet, objects of desire can be in the past or in the future (see Taishō 1539, p. 531a27ff.). Under the *Vijñānakāya's* argument, the cause of those desires must be real.

While the *Vijñānakāya* does not discuss the ontological *dharmas* qua *dharmas*, the *Mahāvibhāṣa* discussion of this doctrine explicitly refers to the status of "all *dharmas*." The *Mahāvibhāṣa* presents four different interpretations of the doctrine that dharmas exist in the past, present, and future. All agree that the term "existence" pertains to *dharmas* in the past, present, and future; they only differ in what they ascribe modification to. The four interpretations ascribe the modification to a change in: (1) mode (*bhāva*); (2) characteristic (*lakṣaṇa*); (3) position (*avasthā*); and (4) relative difference between past and future (*anyathā*). In each case, Vasubandhu repeats what appears to be a stock phrase from the *Mahāvibhāṣa* itself: "There is a modification of the (*bhava*, *lakṣaṇa*, *avasthā*, and *anyathā* respectively); there is no modification of the substrate (*dravya*)" (cf. Pradhan 1975: 296; Taishō 1545: 396a21). The accepted position of the school glosses the *dravya* of the earlier passage with "nature" (*svabhāva*) and states that the nature of a *dharma* exists in the past, present, and future, while its function (*kāritra*) is discharged only in the present (Taishō 1545, p. 396b22–3).

The idea that *dharmas* exist in the future, pop up in the present, and disappear into the past highlights the theory that there is a stream of *dharmas* coming from the future to the present and then from the present to the past. The term "stream" (*saṃtāna*) is subsequently used to refer to the flow of *dharmas* that make up an individual person. Once a future and past string of *dharmas* is posited, two new entities (both included in the *cittaviprayuktasaṃskāra*) needed to be postulated to describe how one could acquire or be cut off from something that always exists: acquisition and nonacquisition (*prāpti* and *aprāpti*). The use of these terms appears in early Sarvāstivāda texts such as the *Dharmaskandha* and the *Prakaraṇapāda*, although its full application does not become set until the *Mahāvibhāṣa* (Cox 1995: 79).

There is another context in which *dharmas* are treated as existing substantially. In the *Mahāvibhāṣa*, the distinction is often made between something existing substantially (*dravyatas*) and nominally (*prajñaptitas*). While the word *dravya* itself can, like *svabhāva*, simply be an indicator of class inclusion, we can safely assume it refers to substance properly understood when it is contrasted with nominal existence.

Theravāda abhidharma, for its part, seems to have moved farther away from a commitment to the substantiality of *dharmas*. Noa Ronkin argues (2005: 98–99) that while the *Peṭakopadesa* refers to *sabhāva* as the cause (*hetu*) of a *dharma*, it is only in the commentarial literature that we find statements such as "a *dharma* is the bearer of its *sabhāva*." Even there, Ronkin argues that this reflects more of a process-oriented metaphysics than a substance metaphysics. For the Theravādins, the move toward substance metaphysics (if they ever do, in fact, arrive there – for a counter-argument, see Gethin 2005) is tied closely with the theory of momentariness. Nevertheless, we find *dharmas* to be increasingly individuated as the history of Theravādin abhidharma progresses, even if what is being so individuated are events rather than things. The *Kathāvatthu*, for instance, argues that only mental *dharmas* are momentary, whereas material *dharmas* persist for varying durations. Further, it is stated only in the commentarial literature that a material *dharma* lasts for sixteen or seventeen thought moments (Ronkin 2005: 62–63). Indeed, Theravādins seem to have been more interested in thought moments than the Sarvāstivādins. One of the unique doctrinal developments in Theravādin abhidharma literature is the "consciousness series" (*citta-vīthi*) which first appears in the *Paṭṭhāna* (Cousins 1981). The consciousness series is defined as a continuum of moments of thought (*citta*) and mental concomitants (*cetasika*) that arise from an "intermediate" (*bhavaṅga*) contentless consciousness.

Abhidharma literature takes Buddhist thought from its basic presentation in the *Sūtrapiṭaka* to new levels of sophistication and complexity in later abhidharma treatises. Its arguments regarding the nature and classification of reals and the soul (or more precisely its absence) clearly articulated the Buddhist philosophical position that could then be defended against the doctrines of competing Buddhist and non-Buddhist philosophical schools.

NOTE

1   A number of scholars have discussed the connection to the Vaiśeṣika school, although many have noted that the borrowing could have initially been from the grammarians. Indeed, scholarship on Vaiśeṣika has yet to resolve the problem of whether the Vaiśeṣikas borrowed from the *Mahābhāṣya* or vice versa (Ronkin 2005: 50).

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ETHICS

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Daniel Cozort

INTRODUCTION

Many religions value perfect faith or submission to God or gods. Buddhism is a nontheistic religion whose ideal is human perfection, described as a state of contentment, happiness, wisdom, love, and compassion. Because this ideal involves the perfection of virtue as well as attainment of insight, ethics (*śīla*) in Buddhism are particularly important. As Damien Keown writes, "Buddhism is a response to what is fundamentally an ethical problem – the perennial problem of the best kind of life for man to lead" (1992: 1).

According to the *Path of Virtue* (*Dhammapada*), a popular collection of the Buddha's aphorisms from the Pāli canon of Theravāda Buddhism, the practice of perfection is simply this: to abstain from all evil, to cultivate good, and to purify one's mind (verse 183). A Buddhist needs to know initially how to distinguish right from wrong, and then how to cultivate virtue. In the end, he or she should become the sort of person who, having purified his or her mind, no longer needs to follow rules, having been transformed by the path into someone who naturally embodies virtue. This transformation has implications not only for the transformed individual but also for the society in which he or she is located.

KARMA: INTENT, ACTION, AND CONSEQUENCES

Karma literally means "action" or "deed," but normally is used to refer to the causal *link* between our deeds and our future experiences. By the Buddha's time, karma was a common Indian concept. The Buddha regarded it as the natural law of the cosmos. Good deeds (variously defined) lead to good results, in this or later lifetimes, and bad deeds lead to bad results. Within the framework of Indian cosmology, the best results might be birth as a god (with an immensely long life of great pleasure) and the worst as a hell being (with an immensely long life of great suffering).

The Buddha saw no particular value in deeds themselves, especially if they were performed merely to satisfy custom or to please the gods. Rather, what makes deeds valuable is their motivation. He famously "ethicized" karma, stating, "it is intention (*cetanā*), O Monks, that I call karma" (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* iii.415). Only good *intentions* make actions

good, whereas bad intentions make actions bad. This way of evaluating actions is familiar to us from modern jurisprudence where intent is a crucial element in determining the seriousness of crimes.

The Buddha similarly "psychologized" karma by emphasizing the effects of actions on the *minds* of actors. Karma's strength, he taught, is relative to the extent to which it conditions the mind in positive or negative ways. Karma is comprised, therefore, not only of intentional physical actions but also mental "actions" such as jealousy, hatred, and revulsion. If I so hate someone that I might imagine hurting them, the effect on my mind is only slightly less than if I actually carry out my intention, and thus I will accrue significant negative karma.

The Buddha taught that our actions continually affect our character in the present life and will determine the form of our next existence. Hence, his concept of karma is *deterministic*; but it is not a "hard determinism" wherein our inborn conditioning renders us incapable of choosing courses of action different from what might have been predicted. Rather, it is a "soft" determinism, recognizing that while we are far, far less free than we think, we have the capacity to change (Repetti 2014: 285). Accordingly, even murderers can become saints and the wellborn can become monsters, although these transformations of character are very unlikely. The Buddha would surely nod knowingly at modern research showing that the positions of faith or ideology we acquire by the end of adolescence are seldom altered by later experience.

The best karma is motivated by the four "divine abodes" (*brahmā-vihāra*): love, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity. "Love" and "compassion" respectively refer to our wish that others be happy and that they be free from suffering; "empathetic joy" to our gladness at the happiness and success of others (and sometimes said to be more difficult to generate than love or compassion); and "equanimity" to our ability to regard everyone (at least, every human) as being equal to ourselves and to our ability to bear both setbacks and successes without losing composure. The worst karma, conversely, is motivated by the "three poisons" of delusion, ill will, and greed. Accordingly, many Buddhist practices involve cultivating the divine abodes and reflecting on the harms of the three poisons.

These practices almost always involve reflections that assume the veracity of rebirth. For instance, one might reflect that because, over eons of rebirth, one must have been in every possible relationship with other individual beings, feeling love or compassion for an animal is tantamount to feeling love or compassion for one's own relatives. This raises the question of whether Buddhist ethics *depend* upon a belief in karma and rebirth. The Buddha apparently thought so, for he defined "right view," one of the eight aspects of the path, as being at least a provisional understanding of the four ennobling truths, which for him necessarily involved the concepts of karma and rebirth. Some modern Western Buddhists such as Stephen Batchelor (1998: 39) have argued that beliefs in rebirth are not necessary – one can feel love and compassion for others whether or not one thinks they are linked to oneself karmically – and, in fact, such beliefs may make one complacent because one assumes that one has more births in which to accomplish one's goals, removing any sense of urgency to make the best use of the present.

DOING GOOD

Again, what makes an action good or bad? We have seen that intention is crucial because of the effect it has on the mind. Depending on motivation, an act can either hinder or contribute

to our spiritual development. Thus, before acting we might ask how we are motivated and how we will be affected by what we are about to do. But all of the Buddhist traditions agree that love and compassion demand that we should also ask, "How will this affect others?"

The concern with consequences shows that Buddhist ethics are, therefore, not purely an aretaic or "virtue" ethics, and the emphasis on motivation shows that Buddhist ethics are also not purely utilitarian or "consequentialist," although there is an active scholarly debate about which of these two is its best overall characterization. In addition, the existence of rules and obligations in the form of the five precepts (to be discussed below) and monastic vows shows that for most Buddhists, ethics are "deontological," that is, concerned with universal norms, regardless of one's motivation or the effect one's actions have on others.

One way to conceptualize the relationship between these ethical concerns is to view them as progressive stages (Keown 2005: 18). At first, a Buddhist will be concerned with avoiding bad karma and accumulating good karma by well-defined and well-articulated rules and customs: don't harm, lie, steal, etc.; show respect to monastics, give them food, and listen to their teachings. Then he or she might take steps toward moral perfection, acting with greater generosity, developing more love and compassion, and gaining an understanding of no-self (*anātman*) that gradually erodes the sense of being completely separate from others. Finally, a Buddhist might begin to act with genuine altruism, the highest expression of which is the intention to become a buddha in order to have the greatest possible capacity to eliminate suffering. The initial concern with keeping rules will give way to a broader cultivation of virtues that will in turn become a more spontaneous way of acting guided by one's understanding of the consequences for the welfare of others.

Additionally, there may be a post-moral stage for an advanced bodhisattva, whose altruism might call for the breaking of precepts if so doing would be conducive to the welfare of others. Some Mahāyāna texts adduce examples of extreme situations in which bodhisattvas might even kill if that action would be best for their victim and for others. If, for instance, a psychotic man is killing children in a school, a bodhisattva might have to kill him to prevent him from accumulating even more terribly destructive karma; for this, the bodhisattva would pay a karmic price, even though it would be attenuated because of his or her altruistic motivation.

Again, good acts yield pleasant results, but the pleasantness of the results is not what makes them good; rather, they are good because they are well-motivated and they have positive consequences. Performing an action because one hopes for a reward is much less powerful than doing it out of generosity or compassion, for instance, or even just because one knows it is the right thing to do. If done from truly selfish motives, even an act that on its face is virtuous may earn little merit. For instance, if one donates to charity mostly to be admired, or from a sense of guilt, little merit ensues.

One attempt to distinguish merely good from better actions is to focus on the terms *kusala* (Skt. *kuśala*: skillful, wholesome, virtuous, etc.) and *puñña* (merit; Skt. *puṇya*). Buddhaghosa (ca. fifth century), the dean of Theravāda exegetes, commenting on the *Middle Length Sayings* (*Dīgha Nikāya*), says*:*

> The end result of *puñña*, which is conducive to the round of rebirths, is the might and glory of a universal monarch in the world of men, and that of *kusala* [wholesomeness], which opposes the round of rebirths, is the attainment of *nibbāna* [nirvana], which is the fruit of the path.

> (cited in Premasiri 1975: 72)

Some scholars have argued that *puṇya* refers to actions that lead to pleasant results but, unlike *kuśala* actions, do not improve one's character or lead to insight, i.e., they do not advance one along the spiritual path (King 1964; Spiro 1982). Of course, an action performed with the intention of gaining merit *may* additionally result in an improvement in character (Goodman 2009: 69, referring to the arguments of Martin Adam), although it would also be possible for that act not to improve character.

Because the performance of virtuous acts is very often transformative, leading to human perfection and the attainment of the ultimate peace and freedom from suffering called nirvana, it might be said that for Buddhists, "virtue is its own reward," or, as is often said in Mahāyāna Buddhism, that "the path and the goal are not different." However, because it is also true that virtuous acts *will* definitely bear pleasant fruits, they have an instrumental as well as teleological aspect. Nevertheless, because those pleasant fruits may not ripen in the present lifetime, it may seem to some virtuous persons that "no good deed goes unpunished"!

We have heretofore emphasized intention or motivation and to a lesser extent the consequences of a particular act. However, the *recipient* of one's actions can matter, too: an act will be more powerful if it is done for or against a holy person. Indeed, the Mahāyāna philosopher Śāntideva (ca. eighth century) warns that the merit gained over eons can vanish in a flash of anger toward a high bodhisattva (Cozort 1995: 83). Such a person is at the high end of moral considerability. Humans, in general, have a higher moral status than other animals, which are "lumped together" for the purposes of calculating demerit for harming them (Waldau 2000: 95–96).

Finally, many Buddhist traditions think that the merit one gains through intentionally good deeds can be *shared*. This would seem to contradict the idea that one must *earn* merit. In Theravāda cultures, the concept of merit sharing took the form of dedicating merit to a deceased loved one or to local gods; in the Mahāyāna, it took the form of dedicating one's merit to all sentient beings. But is the merit really given to another? To overcome this apparent anomaly, an explanation developed that no merit actually passes from "donor" to "recipient"; rather, the recipient gains merit on his or her own by rejoicing in the merit of the *donor* (Harvey 2000: 66). This meritorious rejoicing in the merit of others could be explained as "empathetic joy," one of the divine abodes. The donor, of course, gains merit because of the loving-kindness that motivated the attempted donation (Chong 2011).

BUDDHIST ETHICS COMPARED TO WESTERN SECULAR ETHICS

The three principal "families" of ethical theories in the West are deontology, consequentialism, and aretaic. Deontological ethics, such as Kantian ethics, define the good in terms of obligations and rights. We do well if we follow the rules that have been set forth by religion or society; in return, we have inherent rights. Consequentialism or utilitarianism, such as the views of John Stuart Mill, defines the good in terms of the effects of our actions. Good actions are those that have good results. Aretaic ethics, or "virtue" ethics, define the good in terms of how actions align with the development of one's character. Good actions are what good people do. For the most part, perhaps entirely, those actions might be the same as would be dictated by rules or consequences. This view, which looks back to Aristotle, has also been called *eudemonic* ethics, for it is based on wellbeing.

Charles Goodman has argued, in *Consequences of Compassion* (2009), that Buddhist ethics are most usefully seen as consequentialist. He delineates several varieties of Buddhist

consequentialism. The ethics of Theravāda Buddhism, and of the Mahāyāna writer Asaṅga (ca. fourth century), are "rule-consequentialism" because although they promote the welfare of others, they discriminate between different types of person (p. 6); they tell us to live our lives by inflexible rules, but justify those rules by the consequences they produce; and those consequences are the best we can expect as long as most people follow the rules (p. 59). Goodman does not deny that proponents of this ethic are also concerned with the development of virtue, but he argues that, in general, they are even more concerned with rules and consequences.

The kind of ethics represented by Śāntideva and the Tantric tradition, on the other hand, are a type of "act-consequentialism." The right action is the one with the best consequences, regardless of whether or not it would be the consistent with a rule (p. 24). Moreover, the Buddhist version of act-consequentialism seeks the welfare of others but is informed by the realization that because persons do not inherently exist, the separation between them is exaggerated and artificial. At its highest level, awakened beings act spontaneously without making any calculations about the welfare of others. They feel no ethical obligations because they have transcended moral rules (p. 52).

Goodman's overall characterization of Mahāyāna Buddhist ethics is that it might be called character-consequentialism. In this view, the good is not only happiness and freedom from suffering, but also the development of virtues such as love, compassion, and generosity, which improve one's life, whether or not the person recognizes this positive value (pp. 70, 84, 185). For instance, Goodman cites the Tibetan sage Tsong Khapa (Tsong kha pa bLo bzang grags pa, 1357–1419; see the chapter by Powers in this volume), who describes the gifts of the bodhisattva as those things that will bring pleasurable feelings to other beings but also will ultimately benefit them, "setting them in virtue" (p. 104).

Damien Keown has argued that whether or not particular Buddhists have adopted a deontological or consequentialist orientation, the teaching of the Buddha is best understood as virtue ethics. He writes, "This is because Buddhism is first and foremost a path of self-transformation that seeks the elimination of negative states (vices) and their replacement by positive or wholesome ones (virtues). This is the way one becomes a Buddha" (Keown 2005: 25). He also notes the Buddha's emphasis on intention in karma; acts are good primarily because they are well-intended, not because of their desirable consequences (p. 26).

Buddhist ethics are obviously a blend of perspectives. The precepts (and for monastics, the *Prātimokṣa*, a corpus of rules governing monastic behavior) give absolute prohibitions that suggest a deontological character. On the other hand, there are many teachings that point Buddhists towards consequences, particularly in the Mahāyāna, where the ideal is compassion for others. But as we have seen, the Buddha defined karma as intention, which places the emphasis on the development of character. And whether or not one is greatly concerned with the welfare of all sentient beings, it is really necessary to focus initially on one's own spiritual development. One cannot show the path to others if one has not walked it oneself (Goodman 2009: 56). The Tibetan tradition asks whether the bodhisattva should be like a king, who leads a procession; like a ferryman, who crosses a river with his passengers; or like a shepherd, who drives the sheep into the pen before him. Mahāyāna texts state or imply that the bodhisattva is like a shepherd, refusing to attain nirvana until all others have gone before, and East Asian traditions often repeated these admonitions uncritically. However, the Tibetan tradition maintains that the bodhisattva who is skilful must first become awakened and then lead others, like a king.

As we have noted earlier, without awakening most people would be biased by their own attachments and would be unable accurately to identify the needs of others. In practical terms, character-consequentialism is for advanced practitioners.

ETHICS IN THE PATH TO AWAKENING

The path laid down by the Buddha has eight parts that can be grouped into three "trainings" – ethics, meditation, and insight. The development of virtue and cultivation of insight are essentials that meditation facilitates. Virtue and insight must be cultivated together; as Keown says, "If *sīla* [ethics] and *paññā* [merit] are cultivated asymmetrically, a psychological imbalance will emerge in the form of intellectual or legalistic fixation instead of insightful knowledge and compassionate moral concern" (1992: 55). The *Dhammapada* succinctly states that virtue *restrains*, meditation *undermines*, and insight *destroys* the karma that causes suffering and the thirst and ignorance that create the karma. Thus, virtue plays a crucial role in awakening. As we noted earlier, it does so not by creating merit, but by *restraint*; merit is of only instrumental value, leading to a rebirth in which one might have the physical and mental capacities and other favorable conditions (such as being born in a land in which Dharma is taught, in a good family, etc.) so that one might develop insight. Insight, not the pleasant results of good karma, yields the attainment of nirvana. Indeed, insight destroys *all* karma, bad and good. But restraint is very important because it molds character and serves the needs of others. Moral perfection is every bit as important as insight in the path. The arhat (one who is certain to attain nirvana) does not have moral conduct because of his awakening; rather, moral conduct was conducive to his awakening. Although insight counters delusion, the cultivation of virtue counters ill-will and greed.

This role for moral cultivation was rejected by the anthropologists Winston King (1964) and Melford Spiro (1982), who concluded that morality in Theravāda Buddhism is at best a step to awakening and at worst a hindrance that must in the end be abandoned. Working independently, both in Burma, they described Buddhism as having separate "tracks" for lay and monastic. They argued that because monastics are focused on nirvana as a goal, they are unconcerned with the cultivation of moral values, since nirvana involves the destruction of all karma. Only laypeople, whose goal is merely to attain a better rebirth, are intent on the virtues, since they will earn merit. However, this theory has been criticized on several grounds. In the first place, most monks are like laypeople in focusing mainly on the acquisition of merit through ethical action. Second, laypeople as well as monks hold the view that attainment of nirvana is the ultimate good. That nirvana is seen as unattractive to laypeople may be based, in Spiro's case, on viewing it only as a post-mortem state rather than as a life event in which one extinguishes the defilements but continues to exist for a normal life-span (Keown 1992: 91).

THE FIVE PRECEPTS

The principal "restraints" for all Buddhists are the five precepts: not to harm, not to take what is not given, not to lie, not to commit sexual misconduct, and not to become intoxicated. They are not moral imperatives, even though many Buddhists think of them as such. They are more like training guides or rules. Breaking a precept is not a sin, merely a failure to live up to an ideal, although many acts that involve breaking precepts would be illegal or have significant

social consequences. They are seen as a whole, not something one can approach piecemeal. Not everyone makes a promise to keep the precepts, but those who do take them all.

Of the precepts, the most important is the first, non-harm (*ahiṃsā*), since all of the others can be seen as specific ways to avoid harming others. The Buddha spoke out specifically against animal sacrifice and against livelihoods that involve injuring animals (such as fishing, hunting, and butchering). He did not advocate explicitly for vegetarianism, although many Buddhists have followed a vegetarian diet as an expression of non-harm. At the very least, he told his monks not to accept any flesh if they had reason to believe an animal had been slaughtered especially for them. It has been a matter of debate whether or not this means that they *should* accept meat if they have no such knowledge, and whether laypeople too should avoid meat-eating. In any case, Buddhist vegetarianism was more widespread in East Asia than in South or Southeast Asia, and it was virtually unknown in the Tibetan cultural areas where it would have been considerably more difficult to practice because of the harsh climate.

Some types of harm to others are in a special category. There are five actions of immediate retribution (*pañcānantarya*), i.e., acts so heinous that they cause one to be born in a hell immediately and irremediably after one dies. They are: injuring a buddha; killing an arhat; causing the Saṃgha (Monastic Community) to have a schism; killing one's mother; and killing one's father.

The main intent of the second, third, and fourth precepts is clear enough, although a multitude of questions can be raised about particulars. Is it wrong to keep and use something that one finds even if one cannot find the owner? Is it wrong not to mention something embarrassing about oneself even if one is not asked about it? Is it wrong to masturbate? The last precept, on the other hand, has been interpreted with great variety. It is stated (in the Pāli canon) as: "I undertake the training rule to abstain from fermented drink that causes heedlessness." Built into the promise is the reason for the rule: intoxicants cause heedlessness, which leads to the breaking of other precepts. It is generally not viewed as reprehensible in itself; Vasubandhu (ca. fourth century), in his *Treasury of Higher Doctrine* (*Abhidharma-kośa*), regards intoxication as a minor offence. Probably all Buddhist cultures have folk stories revolving around generally virtuous persons who decide that the least serious precept to break would be this one, but who once intoxicated go on to break all of the rest.

Although the precepts are "restraints," each of them has corresponding positive virtues (Harvey 2000: 66). The opposite, or positive intensification, of not harming others is to show them kindness and compassion, cherishing and protecting them; the opposite of stealing is generosity and renunciation; the opposite of sexual misconduct is to feel satisfaction with one's own partner; the opposite of lying is to be honest and trustworthy; and the opposite of intoxication is clear awareness. The positive virtues associated with the precepts are an adequate way of summarizing the qualities of a virtuous person. The *Dhammapada* states: "Overcome the angry by non-anger; overcome the wicked by goodness; overcome the miser by generosity; overcome the liar by truth" (v. 223; trans. Buddharakkhita 1996). Hence, the virtuous person is patient, good, generous, and truthful. The overall intent of the precepts, then, is not to regulate society by outlawing antisocial behaviors, but to encourage Buddhists to cultivate the virtues.

There are additional sets of precepts. Novice monks take on five more precepts that include pledges not to attend entertainments, not to handle money, etc., and which strengthen the precept against sexual misconduct by prescribing celibacy. And some laypeople take extra vows (such as eating only before noon), as though they were novice monks, once a week according to the phases of the moon (*Aṅguttara Nikāya* [*Enumerated Sayings*] 8.43).

THE VINAYA

The *Vinaya* is a major category of the Buddhist scriptures, consisting of a large number of sometimes complex regulations for monastics (the *Prātimokṣa*), commentaries, and supplemental rules. The Theravāda tradition, relying on the Pāli canon, has 227 rules for monks (*bhikkhu*) and 311 for nuns (*bhikkhunī*); East Asian Buddhists (with the exception of some schools in Japan) follow the *Dharmaguptaka Vinaya*, which has 250 rules for *bhikṣus* and 348 for *bhikṣuṇīs*; monastics in Tibetan cultural areas follow the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, which has 253 rules for *bhikṣus* and 364 rules for *bhikṣuṇīs*, although full ordination is still not a reality for Tibetan *bhikṣuṇīs*.

The Buddhist monastic takes a vow of poverty and commits to a life of discipline, one that the Buddha described as a "middle way" between hedonism and asceticism but which by modern standards looks very ascetic indeed. The rules cover very specific aspects of respect for others, dress, behavior, etc., as well as intensification of the morality of the five precepts for laypeople. For instance, monks, like laypeople, should not harm animals, but they also should not harm plants (as they might, for instance, to construct a shelter).

Although it may seem that higher ethics are only for monastics, laypeople derive guidance from them, too. The Saṃgha is Buddhism's moral exemplar. Hence, although in practice many Buddhists merely observe the five precepts (against misconduct) and support the Saṃgha's material needs, they admire and aspire to higher ethical standards.

The dependence of the Saṃgha on the laity often makes for an ironically close relationship between those who have renounced householder life and those who continue to live it. For each, giving to the other is a primary mode of gaining merit. The laity provide for the physical needs of monastics, and the monks and nuns provide for the spiritual needs of the laity by teaching the Dharma, practicing medicine, and performing rites of passage.

MAHĀYĀNA ETHICS

The Mahāyāna movement was a reinterpretation of fundamental Buddhist doctrines and practices, elaborating and extending tendencies present in the earlier tradition (see the chapter by Lang in this volume). It spread throughout eastern and northern Asia, becoming the principal form of the emerging Buddhist world. Mahāyāna thinkers stress that the freedom of the many is more precious than the freedom of one. Accordingly, wisdom is important in part because it makes possible great compassion. Śāntideva, the most beloved Mahāyāna poet-philosopher, argues that understanding no-self undermines separateness. (As in Theravāda Buddhism, in Mahāyāna "wisdom" is not the acquisition of knowledge, but rather removal of delusion and its associated poisons, greed and ill-will.) Theravāda authors such as Buddhaghosa also connected the understanding of no-self to virtue, but in the Mahāyāna, the idea of the bodhisattva path is of a sequential perfection of particular virtues in concert with the perfection of wisdom.

The Buddha urged his disciples to attain nirvana and become arhats, those who, having quenched the fires of delusion, ill-will, and greed, are able to lead others toward the same end. But he also used the term bodhisattva ("awakening-being") to describe his status over the many lifetimes he strove to become a buddha. Although in Theravāda Buddhism many teachers and kings have been called bodhisattvas (Pāli: *bodhisatta*), only in the Mahāyāna movement did the attainment of buddhahood come to be seen as a universal ideal.

The bodhisattva path as described in Mahāyāna sources does not really differ a great deal from the ideals of early Buddhism. It has "six perfections," but three of them are the trainings of the eightfold path: morality, meditation, and insight. To these are added generosity (*dāna*), patience (*kṣānti*), and effort (*vīrya*). Generosity was already emphasized, especially in the relationship of laity and monastics, as was effort, and patience or forbearance (in particular, not becoming angry in the face of provocation) is implicit in many teachings about right speech and right action.

But the Mahāyāna taught that the bodhisattva path is extraordinarily long, not merely many lifetimes, but rather eons of lifetimes, and that it involves the acquisition of enormous stores of merit and insight. And Mahāyāna writers such as Śāntideva depicted the compassion of the bodhisattva as being so great that it welcomes enormous personal sacrifice and even death for the welfare of others. The bodhisattva surpasses other saints who have achieved awakening because he or she has taken on the responsibility for relieving the suffering of *all* beings. At this level, Buddhist ethics seem extreme and undoable, but for many centuries many Buddhists have been trying to live them.

Mahāyāna texts such as Asaṅga's *Stages of Bodhisattvas* (*Bodhisattva-bhūmi*) also describe the cultivation of morality as having three phases: as restraint; as pursuit of what is conducive to nirvana; and as altruistic action. Roughly speaking, the first is adherence to the precepts both in their prohibitions and in the positive values they imply; the second involves cultivation of all good qualities in conjunction with cultivation of insight; and the third involves helping others in all manner of ways, cultivating gratitude, protecting others, sympathizing, etc. (Keown 1992: 140–41).

The Mahāyāna tradition recognized that it would be easy for the impulse of compassion, if not mediated by wisdom, to become an "idiot compassion" (in the words of the Tibetan teacher Chögyam Trungpa) that may do more harm than good, or to become self-destructive. Wisdom means understanding that all things are empty (*śūnya*) of inherent existence and therefore that they exist in a complex web of dependency. In ethical terms, wisdom is the awareness of the full range of both the factors that contribute to a particular being's suffering and the consequences of particular paths of action.

The Mahāyāna texts contained much that was new and that even seemed contradictory to earlier teachings. But Mahāyānists explained that these variations merely exhibited the "skilful means" (*upāya-kauśalya*) of the Buddha, whose intention in teaching was to lead hearers to awakening and who accordingly taught different things to different audiences in different circumstances. In the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*), which became very important in East Asia, he gives several parables that demonstrate how a Buddhist teacher might act in a paternalistic fashion, obscuring the truth from his hearers in order to give them what they need at the time. As Keown (2005: 19) notes, "The new imperative was to act in accordance with the spirit and not the letter of the precepts," so that hypothetically a bodhisattva, concerned with the welfare of others, might break precepts, even that of non-harm, if called upon by the situation.

The *Stages of Bodhisattvas* notes that if someone were about to commit one of the heinous acts that entail immediate retribution, a bodhisattva might take that person's life to spare them great suffering. A male bodhisattva might have sexual intercourse to prevent a woman from generating anger if her advances were rejected. A bodhisattva might tell a lie to save others from death, imprisonment, or mutilation; might commit slander if it would separate a good person from evil friends; might speak harshly to stop someone from

committing an evil act; or might use dancing, singing, or idle chatter to draw in someone who would be attracted to the good (Keown 1992: 143; Lele 2013).

The following two sub-sections concern movements within the Mahāyāna, Pure Land and Tantra, that diverged from the generalizations that apply to the rest of the Mahāyāna.

Pure Land Ethics

The primary practice of East Asian Buddhism's largest tradition, Pure Land (Jingtu 淨土; see the chapter by Jones in this volume), consisted of devotional prayer to the Buddha Amitābha, whose western Pure Land Sukhāvatī provides salvation. Shinran (親鸞, 1173–1263), founder of Jōdo Shinshū (浄土真宗), emphasized reliance on Amitābha ("other-power") rather than the cultivation of virtue. Although at a later point it was clarified that one ought to be good out of gratitude to Amitābha, the Pure Land tradition has nothing like the three trainings of morality, insight, and meditation, as in early Buddhism, and the cultivation of compassion as in other Mahāyāna sects.

Tantric Ethics

Within the Mahāyāna, a new strand of practice arose in India in or before the sixth century CE with the appearance of tantric texts attributed to the Buddha. Tantric practice is based on the use of imagination to accelerate progress toward awakening. One visualizes oneself as a buddha, regarding one's negative mental states such as lust and anger as being transmuted into positive energy. Tantric ceremonies may involve antinomian elements such as consumption of alcohol, eating of meat, and ritualized sexual intercourse. Neophytes do these activities only in imagination, but even so they represent serious departures from monastic vows unless the practitioner has a firm "divine pride" or belief. The guidance of a guru is considered essential for real progress.

Tantric practitioners protect themselves from the negative karma of their unconventional practices by taking special vows (*samaya*). Many of them are similar to monastic vows, but among the unique precepts are promises not to: belittle one's guru; regard Sūtra teachings as inferior to those of Tantra; share the secrets of tantra with those not initiated; despise women; use a consort without qualifications or without maintaining "divine pride"; or pretend to be a great yogi (Berzin Archives).

BUDDHISM AND SOCIETY

Buddhism has sometimes been characterized as an otherworldly tradition unconcerned with the management of social realities. It is true that Buddhism is not primarily a social movement; it is mainly concerned with individual awakening. But this has social implications. The precepts enjoin Buddhists be harmless, honest, truthful, faithful, and sober; the four divine abodes encourage love, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity; the Mahāyāna perfections add generosity, patience, and concentration. None of these virtues can be developed without social interaction, and their perfection moves society in a more virtuous direction.

Also, there is much material in the Buddhist canons that shows that the Buddha, and subsequent leaders, frequently reflected on the social implications of the Dharma. The Buddha taught precepts for the restraint of behavior but also gave advice on how to manage

different kinds of relationships, such as those between teachers and their pupils, employers and workers, partners in marriage, and family members (Harvey 2000: 97).

He did not often oppose existing social structures. He did not seek to abolish class distinctions or oppose the rights of kings. Apparently he thought either that given the spread of the Dharma, class distinctions and authoritarian government would decline and disappear, or just that it would be counter-productive to oppose them, channeling energy that should be committed in individual liberation. In Buddhism's Asian proliferation, it accommodated itself to social systems, usually without having to compromise itself. One exception is caste discrimination, which he explicitly criticized. He famously defined a brahman as someone who acts virtuously, not someone born into a family of brahmans.

The Buddha spoke often of the *cakravartin* ("wheel-turning") king, the ideal sort of ruler who existed in the past. According to his legend, Siddhārtha Gautama (the Buddha's birth name) would have been a *cakravartin* himself had he not become a holy man. The *cakravartin* is just, generous, and protective of those under his rule. The Emperor Aśoka (304–232 BCE), who conquered most of what is now India by force, repented his violence and attempted to model himself on the ideal. A Dharmic society, ruled by a *cakravartin* and populated by citizens intent on practicing the Buddhist virtues, would be one free from the inequities and strife that plague ordinary ones. Although Buddhism has never spoken in the language of "rights" and "duties," it is clear enough that these are implied in the vision of the precepts and king–subject relationships. People ought to be free from fear of harm, protected against theft and dishonesty, and treated judiciously when conflicts arise.

In Buddhist monasticism we can see some other principles that would apply in an enlightened society. Honest communication is valued: every fortnight, monastics make confession to each other of even the smallest infractions of their vows. Decisions are made according to democratic procedures. There is no hierarchy save for seniority; elders are accorded the highest respect.

ENGAGED BUDDHISM

Engaged Buddhism is a modern movement that seeks to use the insights of meditation to address social, political, and economic problems. It began principally through the efforts of the contemporary Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–), who invites Buddhists to participate in an "Order of Interbeing" (see the chapter by Powers in this volume). Its fourteen precepts supplement the five precepts of the Buddha: they include pledges not to be bound to any doctrine, theory, or ideology; not to force others to adopt one's views; not to avoid contact with suffering; not to accumulate wealth; not to maintain anger; not to lose oneself in distraction; not to use the Buddhist community for personal gain or political purpose; not to let others kill; and not to mistreat one's body. Hanh feels that acting to relieve suffering is just meditation in action, a natural outcome of the practice of compassion. Christopher Queen has argued that Engaged Buddhism might represent a new "vehicle" (*yāna*) in addition to Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna and that the ethics of Engaged Buddhism are a new tradition beyond those of discipline, virtue, and altruism (Keown 2005: 34–35).

BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVES ON
CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Buddhists have not until recently attempted to work out precise positions on many issues with a moral dimension such as war, justice, punishment, sexuality, medical ethics, and environmental degradation. Although Buddhism, like all other religions, has teachings on "morality," it has largely lacked the systematic philosophical exploration of morality that is meant by "ethics." Because Buddhism's ancient texts have little material to offer on many of these issues, those who attempt to construct "the" or even "a" Buddhist position usually base themselves on larger principles such as Buddhist teachings on the virtues of love, compassion, generosity, etc. and its critique of greed, ill-will, delusion, etc. "Engaged Buddhism" has used these principles to involve Buddhists in issues such as war, environment, human rights, and LGBT rights. However, Buddhists live in the same world as do other people, and some have resorted to violence, waged war, discriminated against ethnic minorities and women, incarcerated gay people, enforced capital punishment, and promoted development at the expense of the environment, justifying their actions as consistent with Buddhist principles. The rule of thumb to which we have pointed previously – namely, that actions motivated by the three poisons are bad whereas those motivated by their opposites are good – leaves plenty of room for disagreement.

As an example of how Buddhists might approach a contemporary issue, I will briefly sketch what Buddhism might contribute to the climate crisis, by which I mean such interrelated problems as rising seas, species extinction, loss of biodiversity, consumption of resources, farming practices, and meat-eating, to name a few. As we will see, there are widely divergent possibilities.

Early Buddhist texts display an ambivalent attitude toward the environment in general and the lives of other animals in particular. Although they never affirm that it is permissible to harm plants or animals, they do not explicitly forbid practices of farming, logging, or city-building, or the use of animals for labor, all of which can harm. However, some early texts provide resources that modern Buddhists can apply to environmental problems. In the *Heap of Jewels Discourse* (*Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra*), the Buddha teaches forest-dwelling monks to show kindness to animals, even to the point of allowing predators to eat their flesh. He adds that the forest will be conducive to their practice (as it was to his; his awakening famously happened under a tree) because it will help them to see that, like the grass and trees, they have no *ātman* (persistent self) and arise merely from causes and conditions (Chang 2000: 19).

Right livelihood includes nonparticipation in occupations such as butchery, which means that historically those roles have often been filled by non-Buddhists, such as Muslims in Tibet. But does *ahiṃsā* mean that Buddhists should be vegetarian? The Buddha did not say so. He *may* have discouraged meat-eating in general, as some have suggested, even though he permitted monks to eat meat as long as they had no reason to believe that animals had been killed specifically to provide their food. Or he may not have actually made such an exception, as others, such as Roshi Philip Kapleau (1912–2004), have contended (Kapleau 1986). In any case, over the long course of Buddhism's development, no general Buddhist policies emerged regarding wildlife conservation, forest preservation, animal husbandry, and the use of animals for work.

As twentieth-century environmentalism came to the attention of Buddhists, discrete attitudes began to emerge in the ranks of Buddhist scholars and leaders (Harris 1995). Those

who are sometimes labeled "Green Buddhists" think that Buddhist doctrines such as dependent-arising (*pratītya-samutpāda*) provide a clear basis for concern about other life forms and their habitats. For instance, Joanna Macy (1991) compared dependent-arising to systems theory, which explores the intricate interrelationships of systems in particular problems. She concludes that when any problem is analyzed thoroughly, it reveals that in some way or another every phenomenon impinges on every other phenomenon. This is put simply and graphically in "Interbeing," an essay by Thich Nhat Hanh (1992), probably the most famous "Green" Buddhist. He states that if one looks deeply, one can see clouds and sunshine in a sheet of paper, since without the sun and rain no tree could have grown to have supplied the pulp from which it was made. He goes through a list of other factors (such as the logger, the logger's parents, and the logger's breakfast) to conclude that in some way or another all things depend upon all other things (1992: 96). "Green" Buddhists assert that because dependent-arising ultimately means that all things are related to us, if we care about ourselves we must also care about the fate of the Earth and all that is in it, a shift in attitude Macy calls the "greening of the self." Green Buddhists with a Mahāyāna perspective also refer to the doctrine that all sentient beings have "buddha nature" (understood in various ways, but always including the idea that all beings have the potential to become buddhas; see the chapter by Duckworth in this volume). Because of their buddha nature, all beings have intrinsic value and should be protected.

Another, smaller group are scholars who agree that Buddhist doctrine can probably support concern for the environment but who are critical of Green Buddhists. Lambert Schmithausen (1991) carefully contextualizes early Buddhist teachings on the possibility that plants are sentient and about regard for animals and concludes that while lessons drawn from these teachings might be applicable to current situations, one should be careful to qualify their support rather than portraying them as "Buddhist" doctrines. Christopher Ives (2013: 542, 553) criticizes the Green Buddhist interpretation of dependent-arising on several grounds: it goes far beyond the original context for the Buddha's teaching and the history of the Buddhist tradition; it is wrong to assume that we necessarily value anything upon which we depend; and it implies that things have intrinsic value and rights and that they are equal.

Nevertheless, he agrees that Buddhism contains ample sources relevant to the problem, such as meditation that reveals interdependence, virtues that foster simplicity, frugality, contentment, and generosity, and teachings about false concepts of self that underlie greed (Ives 2013: 546–56). David McMahan (2008: 174–176) is critical of Thich Nhat Hahn's expansion of the idea of rebirth (because his concept of "Interbeing" connects our lives not just with the chain of rebirths established by karma, but also with our relationship to the cosmos) and revision of the idea of karma (because instead of attributing the poor circumstances of a life to prior actions, he blames political and economic systems in which we all participate).

In a yet smaller group are scholars who feel that Buddhism provides no grounds for an environmental stance, or even that it is fundamentally anti-worldly. Noriaki Hakamaya is a proponent of "Critical Buddhism," a movement in Japanese Buddhist scholarship that seeks to "prune" concepts from Mahāyāna Buddhism that it feels are at odds with fundamental Buddhist doctrines. Like the scholars named above, Hakamaya criticizes Green Buddhism's extension of the doctrine of dependent-arising, but he does not suggest that there are resources for environmental action (Swanson 1993).

Finally, an important segment of Buddhist thinkers might be labeled "nondual ecologists." They are inspired by Mahāyāna philosophers and poets, particularly in China, who wondered whether plants, or even rocks and clouds, should be considered "sentient beings" and as having "buddha nature." Gary Snyder (1930–), a poet and Buddhist activist, has explored the implications of the philosophy of the Japanese Zen master Dōgen 道元禅師 (1200–1253) in his "Mountains and Rivers Sūtra": 山水經 *Sansuikyo*) and the metaphor of Indra's Net (found in the *Flower Garland Discourse* (*Avataṃsaka Sūtra*; Ch. *Huayan jing* 華嚴經), the theoretical basis for the Chinese Huayan school). Dōgen collapses cause and effect, declaring that there is a world of sentient beings in water or in clouds (Snyder 1990: 117); hence, the dualism of cause and effect or environment and sentient being is denied. Indra, the mythological king of the gods in the Indian Vedas, has a magical net with gems at each knot; the gems have many facets and reflect each of the other gems, so that each contains all of the others. The philosophy of Huayan, accordingly, is radically nondualistic, asserting that all phenomena interpenetrate. Snyder finds Indra's Net a fitting metaphor for the way in which the different elements of the "food web" (the phrase he prefers to "food chain") convert energy from other parts into different forms, so that although we might be one particular part of the food web we are also found everywhere in it (Barnhill 1990: 26). Another "nondual ecologist," John McClellan (1993: 60), wants to move beyond biocentrism, the regard for all life, to identification with "Everything That Moves," which includes everything that exhibits negentropic activity – activity of organization and creativity – such as math, music, beliefs, social systems, culture, and technology. Because there is just Sentient Being, not sentient beings, nothing requires protection because there is nothing that is vulnerable to a threat (pp. 62–63).

Theistic religions can ground their concern for the environment on relations with sacred beings. The tribal religions of the past (and present) considered nature to be infused with spirits and depended upon their shamans to manage the larger ecological field. Buddhism does not share these beliefs and is not necessarily concerned with maintaining biodiversity, preventing the extinction of species, or even saving the Earth. But it *is* very interested in awakening as many people as possible, which cannot happen in the conditions of poverty and strife that the climate crisis threatens to intensify. Awakening also increases, at the very least, a sense of being connected with what is outside of ourselves (as Thich Nhat Hanh says, a human being is made of only nonhuman elements). And Buddhism is very interested in the cultivation of virtues. The cultivation of contentment and generosity alone would reduce acquisitiveness and selfishness, which would go a long way toward reducing consumption and waste. The cultivation of love and compassion would raise concerns about the effect of our actions upon other humans and all other sentient beings and their environments. In summation, it appears that there are many resources in Buddhism relevant to environmental issues.

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ORTHODOXY, CANON, AND HERESY

Jamie Hubbard

INTRODUCTION: ORTHODOXY AND ORTHOPRAXY

If there is anything that seems to be taken for granted in modern representations of Buddhism it is that it is and always has been a religion marked by tolerance and acceptance in all areas. One example of this is the widespread notion that, unlike Christianity for example, Buddhism has always had an open-minded approach to doctrine and scripture, allowing and even encouraging the ongoing production of sacred text without the sort of closure – assumed of the Christian canon – that brands some texts as spurious, others as apocryphal, and still others as downright heretical. This is underscored by the further claim that Buddhism is a practice-centered religion rather than a belief- or doctrine-centered one – that is, Buddhism is about orthopraxy rather than orthodoxy, what one *does*, not what one *believes*.

Indeed, Buddhism, unlike the Brahmanic tradition from which it emerged, has nearly always denied scripture as a valid source of knowledge (*pramāṇa*), preferring direct experience (*pratyakṣa*) and valid inference (*anumāna*). The natural culmination of this tendency is to deny even the one whose words are enshrined in scripture, as in the famous Zen saying, "If, on the path to awakening, you meet the Buddha, kill the Buddha." The picture of Huineng 惠能 (638–713) tearing up the scriptures represents this because, as is well known from the Zen tradition, truth "does not depend on the words and letters" of doctrine and texts but is rather the direct *experience* of a truth specifically transmitted *outside* of the scriptures. This is the position that is best known in the West, and it fits well with the anti-institutional spirituality and anti-intellectual experientialism that characterizes much of New Age religiosity and postmodern philosophy. Reginald Ray (1994: ch. 1), for example, argues that the paradigmatic saint in Buddhism is a wandering meditator who was in constant tension with the textual and precept orientation of settled monasticism, which he clearly sees as a betrayal of the true spirit of Buddhist practice.

This downplaying of the importance of doctrine is also supported by scholarship that argues that different doctrinal lineages are inconsequential in monastic life, with monks in the same monastery easily holding different doctrinal positions so long as they followed the same monastic code, *Vinaya*. Schisms in the Buddhist community were never a matter of

doctrinal dispute and always stemmed from legal issues, that is, matters of *Vinaya*. *Saṃghabheda*, dividing or splitting the monastic community, refers to different schools emerging from divergent interpretations of monastic discipline. Again, this is seen to be quite different from Christianity, where schisms were occasioned by different interpretations of dogma.

On the other hand, less well-known perhaps – but thankfully more often practiced than the assassinations of buddhas met upon the path – nearly every collection of Buddhist scriptures – from the recitation by Ānanda at the very first council to the edition of the *Tripiṭaka* prepared at the Sixth Council in Myanmar some fifty years ago to the publication of the many digital versions of the Buddhist scriptures that monks and scholars now use – was prompted by the heartfelt desire to accurately preserve and thereby transmit the scriptures containing the words of the Buddha. Indeed, if you travel to Buddhist Asia you will see prayer flags with scriptural verses fluttering in the wind, symbolically spreading the word of the Dharma to all directions; vast libraries of Buddhist texts everywhere, some contained in giant drums thirty or more feet around that can be revolved in order to circulate Buddhist works throughout the universe; painted depictions of scriptural stories; and of course monks and laity alike reverencing the scriptures in a multitude of ways, from memorization, chanting, study, and commentary to copying, ornamenting, and other ritualized forms of honoring the text. Even in the highly scholastic tradition of Tibetan debate – which closely follows the logical systems that deny scripture validity as a means of knowledge – recourse to scriptural authority is the most common – and unassailable – means of proof. The *Lotus Sūtra* goes so far as to declare that anyone who even copies a single line of the text will attain innumerable merits and eventually achieve perfect awakening, an attitude that aptly reflects what has come to be called the "cult of the book."

It is thus no accident at all that in Chinese the collection of Buddhist texts is called *Dazang jing* 大藏經, the "Great Treasure House of Scriptures," because the scriptures are like treasures, wish-fulfilling gems that will give us our greatest wish – nirvana. This attitude is represented by the image of Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–64) carrying a backpack full of scriptures. Xuanzang, like others before and after, obviously felt quite strongly that the words of the Buddha were not to be torn up or used for firewood – on the contrary, as with Buddhists everywhere and in every time, Xuanzang was willing to go to great lengths to secure the accurate transmission of the Buddha-Dharma. My opposition between Xuanzang and Huineng is, of course, a false dichotomy, pitting historical record against rhetorical flourish. The actual records of the Chan/Zen traditions show just how wordy the wordless tradition was, at the same time prestigious Zen universities in contemporary Japan tell of their academic vocation. So too much of the material that Xuanzang translated, such as the 600-volume *Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra* (*Da bore boluomiduo jing* 大般若波羅蜜多經, T. 220), is, even in its negative approach, about language (and, at 600-volumes, rather verbosely so).

In this essay I intend to explore this lesser-known and less appreciated role of doctrine and scripture in the Buddhist tradition. First I will discuss the concept of orthodoxy, known in the Buddhist tradition as *saddharma*, the "true or correct teachings, doctrines; orthodoxy" (Pāli *saddhamma*, Ch. *zhengfa* 正法) in the early Buddhist tradition, and then turn to the issue of canon and scriptural authority in China, and finally give a case study of texts that ran afoul of the Chinese orthodoxy and got "kicked out of the canon."

ORTHODOXY (*SADDHAMMA/SADDHARMA*) IN INDIA: TRANSCENDENT AND LITERAL

To begin with the True Teaching or *Saddharma*, there are many usages of this term in classic texts as well as in contemporary works – a quick search of the Web turns up over 39,000 references to the English term, 69,000 for the Pāli and Sanskrit, and over 2 million for the Chinese. Of course these hits are all over the map, from the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa*'s sense of "true righteousness established in the world by Krishna" to one of my favorites, a discussion of the "True Teaching bum" in *Hippies from A to Z*, that is,

> open-minded folks when it comes to religion [who] study many of the world's religions and take what makes sense and enhances personal freedom and reject the dogma … [including in their search] Christ, Buddha, Lao Tzu, Krishna, Gandhi, even some latter-day saints like [John] Lennon, [Tim] Leary and [Jim] Morrison [of the Doors].
>
> (Stone 1999: 51)

Far-fetched as it may seem, we'll see that the hippie sense of "True Teaching" is not, in fact, so far from one important sense of the Buddhist usage and also resonates well with the modern "Buddhist Geek" movement (Gleig 2014).

In Buddhist texts too there is a broad range of meaning given to *saddharma*. Thus *saddharma* can simply mean a good or auspicious thing as, for example, the "seven *saddharma*" of faith, shame, appreciation of consequence, learning the teachings, vigor, mindfulness, and wisdom. Broadly speaking, however, there are two different understandings of *saddharma*. The first understands Dharma in a transcendent sense to refer to truth itself or to anything that embodies that truth and hence is conducive to its realization. The second meaning refers more literally to the word of the Buddha, *buddha-vacana*, especially those teachings as preserved in the sanctioned collection of sūtra, vinaya, and commentary. This is close to the dogma rejected by the "A to Z Hippies" and is closer to a sort of orthodoxy not usually expected of the Buddhist traditions.

TRANSCENDENT SENSE OF ORTHODOXY: *DHARMATĀ*

The transcendent sense of *saddharma* understands the Dharma to be more than the literal words of the Buddha and points to truth per se – that is to say, *dharmatā* (Chin. 法性), the real nature of things: interdependent, impermanent, and without abiding self-nature or essence. This concern for the philosophical truth-value of things as opposed to their contingent historical nature is more typical of the Mahāyāna, and it likely reflects the awareness that Mahāyāna scriptures represent a transcendent rather than literal account of the historical Buddha's teaching (although they usually do claim to represent a literal form of *buddhavacana* as well, as, for example, in the story of Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250) recovering the Perfection of Wisdom (*Prajñāpāramitā*) literature from underneath the waters or using the standard phrase "Thus have I heard," which appears at the beginning of Indic discourses attributed to the Buddha. Hence Mahāyāna scriptures, obviously written long after the passing of the Buddha, nonetheless can still claim to be the word of the Buddha, because they represent the *truth* of the Buddha's awareness, inasmuch as anything spoken from the vantage point of that awareness gains the same truth-value as what the Buddha taught. By

resorting to transcendent standards of "truth" a text also avoids (or subverts) all historical concerns about authentic authorship, etc. and even, given the varying nature of doctrinal claims to truth in Buddhist traditions, avoids all need to accord with any particular dogma.

Related to this is the idea that the Dharma is anything conducive to liberation, including the teachings of the previous buddhas, the many bodhisattvas, and enlightened disciples. In this view the truth-value of the Dharma is not so much doctrinally or philosophically based as it is practical or pragmatic. Hence even John Lennon's lyrics, if considered to have a liberating effect, can be seen as the word of the Buddha. This attitude also allows the *content* of the True Teaching to be infinitely variable, admitting of doctrinal diversity, continually adapting to new horizons of spiritual insight as well as new challenges of interpretation at the same time as the category of "True Teaching" continues to be valid. Called by some a "philosophy of accommodation," it is also a recognizable variant of what contemporary philosophers of religion call a strategy of "inclusivism."

Here too we can see the expansive vision of the Buddhist tradition, leading naturally to the declarations in the *Array of the Pure Land* (*Sukhāvatī-vyūha*) or the *Discourse on Meditation on Amitāyus* (*Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*) that in the purified realm of the buddhas even the leaves on the trees and the water of the rivers constantly expound the True Teaching, softly whispering "dissatisfaction, emptiness, impermanence, no-self." It is often remarked that whereas in the Theravāda all that the Buddha spoke is considered to be true, in the Mahāyāna all that is true is understood to be the word of the Buddha, thus possibly including not only the music of John Lennon but even sounds of the trees and mountains around us if they are seen to have a liberating effect. This was indeed the conclusion of Dōgen 道元 (1200–53), the famous Japanese Zen teacher, who, in wondering about several important Zen texts that had long been considered of doubtful origins, concluded that *when considered by an awakened person* not only are heretical sūtras the word of the Buddha, but "also everything in nature – the sun, moon, stars, mountains, water, trees, stones – is considered a sūtra in itself." From this point of view, what phenomena are not marked by buddha-nature for those who but have eyes to see, ears to hear? And so Gary Snyder (1930–), author of the "Smoky the Bear Sutra," felt no compunction in using "sūtra" in the title and concluding with the well-known words, "Thus have we heard," signifying that what has been reported is the word of the Buddha (Snyder 1969).

Finally we can note that in this sense of Dharma as that which accords with reality and hence contributes to the liberation of sentient beings, the True Teaching is eternal and unchanging, unaffected by historical contingency. As is well known from the *Connected Discourses* (*Saṃyutta-nikāya*), the stability and way of *Dhamma*/*Dharma* (*dhamaṭṭhitatā*; Skt. *dhammaniyāmatā*) will remain the same whether or not the *tathāgata*s (buddhas) appear. As the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*, which incorporates the notion of True Teaching or *saddharma* in its very title) also tells us through the trope of infinitely recurring cycles of buddhas and their True Teaching, the duration of the True Teaching is immeasurable, as is the lifetime of the Buddha himself.

This transcendent sense of the Dharma, then, need detain us no further for it is unchanging and will outlive all canonical collections, oral as well as written, printed as well as digital. Let me briefly turn, then, to another sense of *saddharma*, the more mundane and historically contingent sense of the *saddharma* as the literal word of the historical Buddha as preserved and transmitted in the texts, for this gives us a rather different picture, a picture more like that of Xuanzang and more like the reality found on the ground in the Buddhist world.

SADDHARMA AS LITERAL *BUDDHAVACANA*

The second sense of *saddharma* is much more conservative and looks to an almost fundamentalist sense of what constitutes the True Teaching; it finds it in the words of the historical Buddha and those approved by the historical Buddha. This tradition considers the faithful transmission of each and every word of his teaching of utmost importance and strives to be as literal as possible, adding nothing and leaving nothing out. It isn't hard to see where this attitude came from. All religions face a turning point after the passing of the founder, when the sectarianism implicit in the founding of a new movement manifests itself internally, but the followers can no longer turn to the founder's authority for ultimate understanding. Although disputes over the meaning of the teachings arose during the lifetime of the Buddha, questions of interpretation grew much more acute after his death. It was the need for a standardized body of teachings that led to the first "recounting" of the teachings (*saṃgīti*, usually translated as "council" but in fact meaning "group recitation") after the passing of the Buddha and institutionalized questions of interpretation again and again carved new communities and movements out of the original Saṃgha. There is, for example, the poignant story in which Ānanda, credited with having recited all of the Buddha's discourses from memory at the first council, attempts to correct the mistaken recitation of a monk; after failing to convince him of his error, Ānanda concludes, "There is no one who can get him to change. The Buddha's disciples Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, and Mahākāśyapa have all entered nirvāṇa; to whom could I now turn to as an authority? I shall also enter nirvāṇa" (Strong 2008: 89). It is no doubt in such a doctrinally competitive context that the very concept of *saddharma* or "true/correct teaching" arose, and within the rhetoric of the preservation of the *saddharma* it refers exclusively to in-house orthodoxy vis-à-vis its natural enemy, internal dissension about what are the correct teachings – orthodoxy – and how to best preserve and transmit it.

One text from the *Book of the Gradual Sayings* (*Aṅguttara-nikāya*), for example, shows a concern for *literal* orthodoxy and warns against "the wrong expression of the letter (of the text) and wrong interpretation of the meaning of it," which would lead to the "confusion and disappearance" of the True Teaching, for "if the letter be wrongly expressed, the interpretation of the meaning is also wrong." On the other hand, "if the letter be rightly expressed, the interpretation of the meaning is also right," and this leads to the "establishment, the non-confusion, to the non-disappearance of true Dhamma" (trans. Woodward 1995: 53). Here we are clearly (and quite "literally") told that it is the *letter of the law* and not the spirit ("interpretation of the meaning") that is of central importance in the preservation of the teaching. The chapter on "True Dhamma" (*saddhamma*) from the same text similarly warns that a careless attitude toward hearing, mastering, contemplating, analyzing, and practicing the Dhamma would lead to its disappearance (trans. Hare 1973: 132). The order – hearing and mastering first, practice last – clearly indicates the priority of orthodoxy over orthopraxy. There are, of course, other causes given for the decline of the True Teaching, but the important points are that (a) the reason for talking about the *decline* of the True Teaching is concern for the *preservation* of the True Teaching in the form of accurately preserved teachings; and (b) learning and studying is one of the primary ways to do that.

In this context too we should remember that the preservation of the Buddha's message was no small task, especially in the oral culture of early Buddhist monasticism. Indeed, a major portion of a monks' practice – hearing and reciting texts – is intimately related to the maintenance of approved scriptures and for most was a more important part of the monastic

program than were mental cultivation and awakening. And, if we look at the monastic codes of the various early schools we in fact do find legal mechanisms for deciding which scriptures would be recited and taught, as well as punishments for those monks who shirk this task (Walser 2005: 128ff.). In later cultures, when Buddhist texts were written, much the same function was served by punishments and fines meted out for scribal errors in copying manuscripts. We must remember, then, that doctrines are not just disembodied ideas floating through the air – they are "manufactured goods produced by monasteries … [requiring] allocation of the resources of time and labor, [and for written texts the expenditures for] pens, paper, and ink. Furthermore, storage space had to be devoted to their preservation" (Walser 2005: 123). The shift from oral to written texts changed some aspects of the struggle to preserve the teachings while presenting new challenges. For example, the preservation of fragile written texts in harsh environments was no small task, and so there is an Indian tradition that the most prolific consumer of Sanskrit texts is "his majesty the white ant" (see Lutgendorf 1991: 57).

Maintaining orthodoxy in such an oral tradition demands great attention to the "words and letters," the forms in which the tradition is heard and taught, for the performance of the tradition becomes in good part the tradition itself. Thus again the *Book of the Gradual Sayings* elaborates the *forms* of the teaching, warning that not mastering the "sayings, psalms, catechisms, songs, solemnities, speeches, birth-stories, marvels, [and] runes … leads to the confounding, the disappearance of the True Teaching," as does not teaching it in detail to others "as heard, as learned," and not speaking or repeating it in detail "as heard, as learned" (Hare 1995: 133). In the same way that the particular literary forms of the tradition must be safeguarded, popular literary forms are to be eschewed, for the study of "those discourses that are mere poetry composed by poets, beautiful in words and phrases, created by outsiders, spoken by [their] disciples" will cause the discourse of the Buddha to disappear (Bodhi 2000: 709). It is interesting, of course, to speculate on which "outsiders" might have been guilty of producing such "poetical styles" so attractive to the monks, though the producers of Mahāyāna texts clearly thought they were the targets; and indeed, Mahāyāna works in Sanskrit are often written in beautiful verse.

This leads to an attitude complementary to the concern for the accurate preservation of *saddharma*, that is, anxiety about its disappearance, a worry that, ironically, spawned a great series of doctrinal and practical innovations, particularly in East Asia. This tradition of the "decline of the *saddharma*" is among the most important in the history of Buddhism and, in the form of the "three periods of the doctrine," is well known. Although there are many different models for the decline of the Dharma, the one that became the most popular in East Asia gave 500 years for the existence of the True Teaching, 1,000 years for the Semblance Dharma, and 10,000 years for the Final Dharma, a period in which practice and awakening will be absent and only strife and degeneration remain. Because of the vast importance of this topic, especially in terms of East Asian doctrine and practice, much has been written about it, usually pointing to a deficiency in morality or meditation practice as the cause for the eventual disappearance of Śākyamuni's teachings, leading eventually to a world of chaos and destruction where once the True Teaching reigned. Here I would like to point out that however much moral or other laxity contribute to concern for the state of the Dharma, the rhetoric of its decline was really brought about by concern for its preservation – that is, orthodoxy.

These theories of decline are clearly concerned with the worldly fate of Buddhist scripture (*āgama*) rather than either truth per se (*dhammatā*) or even attainment of that truth

(*adhigama*), and the Theravāda tradition affirms the centrality of "authoritative teachings" over and above practice as the arbiter of *saddhamma*, perhaps not surprising inasmuch as our records are documents preserved in the canon. Buddhaghosa's (ca. fifth century) commentary on the *Gradual Sayings* cited above, for example, claims that the True Teachings will not disappear so long as the "authoritative teachings" (*pariyatti*) remain, because "truly, even if a hundred or a thousand monks were found to undertake the practice of meditation, without learning [the teachings] there would be no realization of the Noble Path" (Strong 2008: 228–29). The Pāli tradition consistently claims that the words of the Buddha (*pariyatti*) are the basis for realization, prior to the practice (*paṭipatti*) of those teachings. Ledi Sayadaw (1846–1923), surely one of the great meditation practitioners of modern Burma, was also concerned about the decline of Buddhist teachings (*sāsana*) and clearly stated the priority of learning:

> The great tradition of learning [*pariyatti* sāsana], which is the tipiṭaka, is the root of the great tradition of practice [*paṭipatti* sāsana] and the great tradition of realization [*paṭivedha* sāsana]. Only when the sāsana of learning is established can the other two sāsanas also be established. The burden of maintaining the sāsana of learning for five thousand years is really very great.
>
> (cited in Braun 2013: 71)

And so the preservation and accurate transmission of the True Teaching has long been a central concern of Buddhists everywhere. The records of the first council convened after the Buddha's passing recount this concern, as do the records of subsequent councils. So too the first commitment of the scriptures to writing at the Fourth Council, in Śrī Lanka in the late first century BCE, was prompted by fear of heterodox scriptures in a mood of sectarian rivalry over orthodoxy (Collins 1981: 96–99). Purification of the teachings through councils or "group recitation" continued to be held periodically. Most recently, in Burma a "sixth council" was convened in the 1950s with the express purpose of "preserving the original word of the Buddha," and the frontispiece to its edition of the canon boldly dedicates this purpose: "*Ciraṃ Tiṭṭhatu Saddhammo – May the True Dhamma Endure for A Long Time!*" The frontispiece also cites two passages from the scriptures concerning the preservation of the *saddhamma*:

> There are two things, O monks, which make the True Teaching endure for a long time, without any distortion and without (fear of) eclipse. Which two? Proper placement of words and their natural [correct] interpretation. Words properly placed help also in their natural [correct] interpretation.

and

> the dhammas [truths] which I have taught to you after realizing them with my super-knowledge, should be recited by all, in concert and without dissension, in uniform version collating meaning with meaning and wording with wording. In this way, this teaching with pure practice will last long and endure for a long time.
>
> (*Dhammagiri-Pāli-Ganthamālā* vol. 33 frontispiece;
> Vipassana Research Institute 1994)

Certainly one of the most striking responses to the anxiety about the disappearance of the teachings was the carving of the sūtras on stone slabs to preserve them through the long dark age. In 605, for example, Jingwan 靜琬 (d. 639), a disciple of Huisi 慧思 (515–577), built the Yunjusi 雲居寺 in the Fangshan 房山 area approximately 75 kilometers southwest of modern-day Beijing. He then began the project of carving the entire Chinese collection of scriptures in stone. His record of 628 invokes the notion of the decline of the True Teaching and notes that he lived in the period of the Final Teaching, praying that in the future, when the teachings had been destroyed, the stone scriptures would appear and re-establish the Dharma. The staggering enormity of the task aside, these texts, as Jingwan wished, now serve as an unequalled source of information about the Chinese canon, unadulterated by the interpolations and redactions of later ages. So too King Mindon (1808–78) convened the so-called "Fifth Council" in Burma in 1871 and, concerned about the fate of the Buddha's scriptures under colonial rule, scribes carved a complete set of the Pāli texts into stone and stored them in over 700 small pagodas at Kuthodaw Pagoda in Mandalay. Other rock-carved canons are known as well, motivated by the same fear that the scriptures will become corrupted and pass into oblivion. These are literally examples of "setting the canon in stone."

Of course, a preference for the transcendent Dharma flourishes as well. Sharon Salzberg, one of the founders of the Insight Meditation Society, noted that one of their mandates in founding the IMS meditation center in Barre, Massachusetts was the preservation of the Dharma. Still, she seems ambivalent about what this means, as she reported that on one of her visits to Burma someone took her to a temple, clearly the Kuthodaw Pagoda mentioned above,

> where they had donated a great deal of money to construct an area for stone slabs on which the entire *tripiṭaka* (the original Buddhist canon) was being engraved. It was like a graveyard, stone slab after stone slab, with people etching out every word in order to preserve the Dharma. On a deeper level the Dharma is preserved only through the realization of beings. It's not preserved as a body of knowledge but in the buddhahood of each realized being.
>
> (*Tricycle* 2/3 (1993): 22)

As noted above, this was surely not the attitude of either the Buddhist monks or the pious laity involved in that huge endeavor.

So we can safely conclude, then, that although an anti-dogmatic and anti-authoritarian epistemology has received more attention among Western Buddhists, a concern for a more literal form of orthodoxy has also been central to the Buddhist tradition since its inception, for if the Buddha's teachings are not preserved and transmitted accurately, how can anybody expect to have access to the release from suffering promised within those teachings? As the oft-used expression has it, "liberation is possible for those who go forth *under the doctrine and discipline* proclaimed by the Tathāgata," not, "liberation is available to anybody who blindly stumbles across it" or has a self-validating experience of Truth.

We can also note that the examples I have given are arguing more for the very notion of orthodoxy rather than the specifics of that orthodoxy. In other words, the rhetoric of True Teachings and their decline is not used to establish which doctrines are true and which are false or which scriptures are *buddhavacana* and which are not, but rather the importance of the preservation and transmission of orthodoxy as a category in and of itself. Indeed, while

accounts of setting the Pāli texts to writing give us a sense of the finalizing of the Pāli canon at this time, we do not know the actual *content* of that canon until nearly 600 years later, through the works of Buddhaghosa. Even the structure of the canon was quite varied. Although the *Tripiṭaka* or the "three baskets" of sūtra, vinaya, and *abhidharma* have come to be synonymous with "Buddhist canon," the actual situation in India was quite different. Some schools used a five- or seven-*piṭaka* arrangement; there are also category structures, such as the twelvefold division (*dvādaśa-aṅga*) and ninefold divisions of the teachings (*navāṅga-śāsana*) that use genre, literary form, and doctrine to structure the canon. These also differed widely among the schools.

It is also quite likely that the content of these various categories shifted frequently, and there are even records indicating that Mahāyāna texts were used in Sri Lanka. Extra-canonical scriptures accorded canonical status also compound any notion of a fixed or closed canon. Indeed, some of the best-known Pāli texts fall into this category, such as *The Questions of King Milinda* (*Milinda Pañha*), the *Guide* (*Nettipakaraṇa*), the Sri Lankan histories (*Māhavaṃsa*, *Dīpavaṃsa*, and *Cūlavaṃsa*), commentaries on sūtras, and especially the works of Buddhaghosa, which are accorded near-canonical status. As Vasubandhu (ca. fourth century) noted in his defense of the Mahāyāna as *buddhavacana*, the collections of all the schools were already quite different from one another by the fourth century, many texts had already been lost entirely, and even particular works often had different divisions and content from one version to another (Cabezón 1992: 227).

It is also interesting that while there obviously were vigorous debates about what constitutes *buddhavacana* throughout the history of South Asian Buddhism, we do not, in fact, have records of texts that were banned or even declared noncanonical in India at this time. There is the Asokan inscription in which he exhorts the monks to *read* certain texts and the *Great Chronicle* (*Mahāvaṃsa*) legend of the Third Council in which King Asoka (304–232 BCE) expels non-Buddhists who had slipped into the community, doctrines are clarified, and the True Teaching is established via recitation. This is typical of all Buddhist councils in South and Southeast Asia, called to address some problem and concluding with a recitation of scripture, a means of preserving the teachings by conserving the scriptures. In the description of the arising of different schools, the *Island Chronicle* (*Dīpavaṃsa*) also notes disagreements about the canon as the source of division, but there are no examples of the *banning* of texts, whether by monarch or monk.

It is true that we might not know of such an instance for the simple reason that we really don't have lists of the texts that were circulating in South Asia. That is, while we have general schema such as the *Tripiṭaka* or *dvādaśa-aṅga* mentioned above, as well as mention of various texts in other, extant works, we do not have catalogs of which texts were considered part of these divisions until quite late. Nonetheless, I think we can say that while there was huge concern for orthodoxy and canonicity in India, it didn't result in anybody actually getting "kicked out of the canon." The situation could not be more different in China, however, and so let me now turn to the Chinese model of canonicity and some actual examples of getting kicked out of the canon.

CHINA

There already existed a well-defined notion of the authoritative or "classic" text in China well before Buddhist ideas and works began to be translated into Chinese. The terms *jing* 經 and *dian* 典 had long been used to refer to texts that were classics in the sense of being

authoritative, normative, or orthodox sources for ideas and values, and these terms include in their etymologies the notions of standards, rule, regulation, and norm. Compilations of texts in standardized collections – *ji* 集 and later *zang* 藏 – had already come into existence, referring to collections of *jing* that contained the sayings and teachings of the sage-kings and that provided norms for society. So as pilgrims and travelers made their way along the trade routes and Buddhist scriptures began to be translated into Chinese, it was only natural that they were called *jing* to give them the authority of the Chinese classics and, not knowing the organizational structure of "*Tripiṭaka*," they also came to be organized into standardized collections along the Chinese model of *ji* and *zang*. And while a "collection of *sūtras*" in itself was never seen to be a closed corpus – new collections continue to be compiled to this day, including some texts and excluding others (volume 85 of the *Taishō Daizōkyō*, the standard edition of Chinese Buddhist texts in use today, even includes works banned from earlier collections) – there still were many factors that contributed to these collections taking on a normative or prescriptive status well beyond what we see in India. That is to say, the "great treasure house of scriptures" took on the function of a closed canon.

THE DISCIPLINE OF BIBLIOGRAPHY

One factor that contributed to a more closed canon was, ironically, the very bibliographic zeal of the Chinese, their enthusiasm for collecting scripture, and their great skill in building and organizing libraries. Whereas in India the early economics of preserving *buddhavacana* meant that it was the duty of each monk in a monastery to contribute to the recitation, memorization, and thereby the preservation of the texts, the written nature of the Buddhist texts in China dictated that they were often collected according to standardized catalogs. In sharp contrast to the lack of library catalogs in early Buddhist India, the Chinese from a very early date began the practice of compiling bibliographies or catalogs of library collections – *jinglu* 經錄 or *mulu* 目錄, and texts within these bibliographies were separated according to canonical status, with the *jing* accorded special status. Although likely dating from a much earlier time, there are directives from as early as the first century BCE to catalog the imperial library, and this continued in subsequent dynasties. These catalogs, as with the later Buddhist catalogs that emulated them, had a clear purpose of separating the true from the false (Storch 2014: 7–8, *passim*). Eventually the Chinese bibliographic zeal developed into the study of canons per se through the compilation of bibliographies or catalogs of collections not necessarily reflecting collections of *actual* libraries. This discipline, *muluxue* 目錄學, also came to dominate compendiums of Buddhist texts, and so, naturally, when monasteries sought to augment their libraries, they turned to these catalogs for collection direction.

Buddhist catalogs emulated catalogs of Chinese scriptures in many ways while also adding new and distinctive features. That is, while inheriting the Chinese concern for orthodoxy, provenance (recording date, place, translator, and other information), and through these two features determining authenticity, they also added taxonomies unique to the Buddhist material as well as new structural categories. Buddhist catalogs took many forms, from lists made during the course of a scholar's research, catalogs of texts collected or translated by individuals, and catalogs of actual libraries (a "shelf list" of extant texts, typically the libraries of individuals and temples), all the way to catalogs of all known Buddhist texts (*yiqie jīng* 一切經). Sometimes the catalogs were based on the actual

examination of texts and other times included texts that were lost or only known through mention in other works.

In terms of structure, Buddhist catalogs developed far beyond the traditional Chinese catalogs of Confucian classics, which largely retained a genre structure, e.g., the four-fold division of classics, history, philosophy, and literature (Okabe 1981: 8–9). In addition to the standard divisions of sūtra, vinaya, and commentary, Chinese catalogers further arranged the texts according to Hīnayāna–Mahāyāna divisions, chronological or dynastic catalogs – additionally ordered by translator/author – registers of spurious, doubtful, and deviant texts, lists of "abridged" texts circulating separately, lists of different translations of the same texts, registers of prefaces, catalogs of lost works, and more. In addition to these much more complex structural elements, the attention to historical and philological detail in the Buddhist catalogs is impressive in comparison to catalogs of the Chinese classics (Okabe 1981: 10–11).

POLITICS AND SCRIPTURE

This second, related, factor that influenced the shape of the Chinese canon is the political nature of scripture in China. The importance of literary texts in imperial China is well commented on, and the central relationship between political power and literary texts long preceded the introduction of Buddhism. As noted above, the very terms used for the classic texts included the idea that these texts provided the norms and rules for society. And, just as it is the rulers who arbitrate the norms and rules for society, the Chinese early on (by the third century BCE) had accepted the idea that the constitution of a canon and its dissemination were the prerogative and duty of the ruler. Whereas in India – with the possible exception of Asoka's alleged intervention – questions of orthodoxy seem to have largely been argued amongst the different Buddhist groups, in China imperial authority was brought to bear on the idea of the legitimacy and dissemination of Buddhist texts. This happened in several different ways, including state sponsorship of pilgrimages to India to bring back texts as well as state sponsorship of translation teams such as those of Kumārajīva (334–413) and Xuanzang. And it also happened through state sponsorship and dissemination of official and clearly defined catalogs of Buddhist scriptures; that is, official catalogs of scriptures compiled at the order of the emperor and distributed throughout the land as the official, imperially sanctioned, canon of Buddhist scriptures, catalogs that separated true or authentic scripture from the false. This began in earnest with the catalogs ordered by Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty (梁武帝, r. 502–57) and continued virtually unchanged throughout Chinese history.

The imperial role is clearly seen in the case of rulers who, as an act of piety as well as for the promotion of orthodoxy, had the Buddhist scriptures themselves copied and distributed throughout their empires – indeed, when printed editions of Buddhist scriptures began to appear in the tenth century, nearly all were produced under imperial authority. Although factors such as merit-making, protection of the state, status performance, and the like contributed to imperial sponsorship of catalogs as well as copies or printed editions of the texts, a common feature runs through all royal patronage: the political nature of scripture, especially the control of orthodoxy and thereby control of Buddhist communities. Here it should be noted that the act of declaring scriptures false or suspicious was a more pro-active approach to orthodoxy than simple noninclusion in a printed canon.

DOUBTFUL SCRIPTURES AND SPURIOUS SCRIPTURES

Catalogs of scripture began to be compiled from almost the inception of Buddhism in China, and nearly 100 catalogs have been created to this day. One of the earliest of these, the *Comprehensive Catalog of Scriptures* (*Zonglizhongjing mulu* 綜理衆經目錄) by Dao'an 道安 (312–85) in the fourth century, is the first that we know to have made judgments about the authenticity of scriptures in circulation at the time – judgments that were themselves always among the primary reasons for compiling catalogs. For example, Zhisheng 智昇 (669–740), perhaps one of the most well-known catalogers, commenting on the tradition of sūtra catalogs, wrote:

> Now as far as the inception of catalogues is concerned, they were intended to distinguish the genuine from the spurious, clarify what is authentic and unauthentic, record the period of the translation, indicate the number of sections and fascicles, add what was omitted, and eliminate what was superfluous. They sought to make [Buddhist literature in China] correspond to the principles of the orthodox teaching [*zhengjiao* 正教] and golden speech [of the Buddha]… . However, since the teachings of the Dharma originated in the remote past, as the net of proselytization widened, the datings of the translations were changed and their periods altered, scriptures were often dispersed or lost, and *chuan* [sections] were arranged out of order. Moreover, from time to time odd persons added spurious and fallacious [scriptures to the canon], scrambling [the genuine and the spurious] and making it difficult to ascertain their identity. This is why former sages and scholars compiled these catalogues.
>
> (trans. Tokuno 1990: 32)

A related concern was that the Chinese found themselves the heirs to the anxiety of the tradition of the decline of the True Teaching described above, with the crucial difference that the rhetoric of decline that originated in India as a rhetoric of legitimacy functioned in China as a given fact. In other words, a decline that was rhetorically predicted for the future in a sort of struggle over orthodoxy in India was received in China as a historical fact, events that had already transpired and therefore needed to be addressed. Thus, just as with the carving of the canon in stone in an attempt to preserve the True Teachings, the decline tradition lent urgency to the need to weed out the spurious in order to defend the true. One of the earliest catalogs and the first to clearly delimit canonical and spurious scriptures, the fourth-century catalog compiled by Dao'an noted above, makes this exact point (and, incidentally, confirms the South Asian mechanisms for achieving textual purity discussed above):

> When monks in foreign countries are trained in the teachings [of Buddhism], they kneel down and receive it orally. The teacher confers on his disciples the teachings exactly as he received them from his own teacher by repeating it ten or twenty times. If even one word deviates [from the accepted transmission], it is revised after mutual conference and [the wrong word] is immediately deleted… . It has not been long since the [Buddhist] scriptures reached the land of Chin [viz., China]. But … sand-grains [are labeled] gold … and if no one corrects [such deceptions], then how can we distinguish the genuine from the spurious? … Now I list what I regard in my mind to be non-

Buddhist scriptures [*feifojing*, 非佛經] in order to warn future aspirants, so that they will all know that these scriptures are despicable.

<div align="right">(trans. Tokuno 1990: 34)</div>

In addition to the simple fact of damning these scriptures by declaring them suspicious, spurious, and even "despicable," imperial edicts could ban scriptures and prohibit their circulation, deviant books were burned, and the catalogers themselves sometimes explicitly proscribed the copying of such works.

Over time we see scriptures divided into the categories of "doubtful scriptures," *yijing* 疑經, referring to treatises of doubtful origins, and "fake or spurious scriptures," *weijing* 偽經, works that were judged to be falsely attributed to Indic originals, and *yijing* 異經, "deviant scriptures." By the time the *Record of Śākyamuni's Teaching* (*Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教錄) was compiled in 730, the catalogs had grown quite extensive and detailed, with descriptions of the contents of spurious scriptures, the circumstances of their composition, and damning judgments of their authenticity. In this catalog, whose organization and verdicts influenced virtually all subsequent orderings of Chinese texts – including the Taishō canon compiled in early twentieth-century Japan and still used by scholars worldwide as the standard collection of Chinese scriptures – over one-third of the scriptures listed (392 of a total 1,076) are deemed spurious and several more (14) are listed as doubtful. Given the authority of these catalogs we can say that, whereas in the early Buddhist tradition discussed above the recitation and oral transmission of scriptures were key to their survival, in China that role was given over to a canonical status dictated by the catalogers. It was not just a matter of disputes over whose version of *buddhavacana* was authentic, but it also affected their chances for physical survival. Indeed, the effectiveness of this level of closure of the Chinese Buddhist canon can be seen in the fact that over 80 percent of the texts that were labeled spurious in the various catalogs were eventually lost. Hence the catalogs were descriptive, prescriptive, and proscriptive all at the same time.

CRITERIA FOR DOUBTFUL AND SPURIOUS SCRIPTURES

We have seen the concern for orthodoxy in Indian Buddhism but also noted the lack of specificity and the attendant lack of condemnation of actual texts by name. In China, however, the catalogers name names, and they also give us precise criteria for their judgments. In general there are two sorts of texts that were kept out of the canon as either suspicious or spurious: (a) the first and greatest concern was with works whose authorship was considered to be falsely attributed, which usually meant indigenous Chinese compositions falsely represented as translations from Indic originals, a judgment itself based on both style and content; and (b) treatises judged doctrinally deviant or socially harmful by the authorities in charge of defining the orthodox Buddhist canon.

As with the process of canon creation in Jewish and Christian communities, these seemingly straightforward concerns were often overridden by then-current notions of orthodoxy and heresy, and so in China texts could move in and out of canonical status as times and standards changed. The need for legitimacy vis-à-vis Daoist rivals, for example, led the important and influential *Record of the Three Jewels through the Ages* (*Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶記; 597) to arbitrarily assign names of eminent translators to many texts previously labeled anonymous or even spurious in order to boost the status of the Buddhist

canon. So too commentaries and compositions that were clearly known to be works of Chinese monks, not attempting to pass themselves off as translations from Indic originals, were also sometimes kicked out of the canon as heretical and sometimes allowed in, depending on which way the social-political winds were blowing. I will examine such a case below.

USE OF THE EXPRESSION
"APOCRYPHAL SŪTRAS"

As an aside, I would like to comment on the scholarly trend to call these indigenous texts "Chinese Buddhist apocrypha" or "apocryphal scriptures." I find this usage to be misleading, particularly if one is familiar with the original meaning or use of the term in Biblical Studies. There, although "apocrypha" does include the sense of spurious or false (and the adjective "apocryphal" even more so), its most common use is to refer to books that, while not strictly considered part of some versions of "the Bible," are treated as authentic scripture – the Pseudepigrapha and books included in the Vulgate, for example. So there is a good case to be made for avoiding the term apocrypha for Buddhist texts for the simple reason that *yijing* and *weijing*, doubtful sūtras and spurious sūtras, are used in a much more damning way by the Chinese catalogers. Even if you understand Chinese "apocrypha" or "pseudepigrapha" to refer to scriptures of dubious authenticity or false attribution, however, not all of the works labeled spurious are actually false attributions to Indic originals, as is the case with Sanjie texts that we will look at shortly, or texts extracted or abridged from Indic originals and circulated separately, another large category of texts often labeled *yijing*. Hence I don't see how "apocryphal" has much utility in the case of Chinese Buddhist works unless its use is carefully restricted to refer to sūtras labeled "*yijing*" or "*weijing*" in the Chinese catalogs themselves. There are simply too many complications and arguments about these categories within the world of biblical literature to carry them over into Buddhist studies. For contemporary scholarship almost *all* Buddhist sūtras are falsely attributed to the historical Buddha and should therefore be considered apocryphal. To select out only one set of texts as spurious seems to buy into the same sectarian concerns as those that drove the original catalogers.

   Of course, this is not unheard of in modern scholarship, as for example the great scholar Mizuno Kōgen (1901–) who, in his superb book *Buddhist Sutras* (1987), divided indigenous Chinese scriptures into two categories: those that are "genuine," that is, conform to orthodox Buddhist doctrine because they "embody the true spirit of Buddhism," are "composed with the intention of disseminating the teachings of Buddhism more correctly," and do not deny "the doctrinal validity of the sūtras" (note the use of "true," "more correctly," and "valid"). On the other hand, there are those that are spurious; that is, sūtras that "either fail to encompass the true spirit of Buddhism or include statements patently inconsistent with the Buddhist teaching." He further divides these spurious texts into four categories:

> (1) sūtras expounded by someone in the throes of some sort of fanatic possession claiming to reveal the word of the Buddha; (2) sūtras expounded in order to take advantage of Buddhism for some purpose; (3) sūtras created in order to palm folk beliefs off as the word of the Buddha; and (4) sūtras that were merely simplified abridgments of the more complex, repetitive translated sūtras.

<div align="right">(Mizuno 1987: 116–18)</div>

To me this taxonomy only muddies the waters further because, in this schema, some of the texts declared spurious in the catalogs are considered genuine, while some texts long regarded as genuine in the catalogs here find themselves labeled spurious. As with other pejoratives used within the Buddhist tradition (like Hīnayāna), I would say that we should restrict our usage to the exact terms used by the catalogs – *yijing* 疑經 and *weijing* 偽經 or their direct translations (doubtful sūtras and spurious sūtras) – and further yet restrict our usage of these terms to describing actual records in actual catalogs where a given text has been so labeled. For example, The *Brahma's Net Discourse* (*Fanwang jing* 梵網經), considered by contemporary scholars to have been composed in China around the 4th century CE, was labeled a "doubtful text" in the *Comprehensive Catalog of Scriptures* (*Zhongjing mulu* 衆經目錄) of 594 but was accepted as canonical in the later *Comprehensive Catalog of Scriptures* of 602. For general academic discourse, however unwieldy it may seem to some, I recommend we stick with "indigenous scriptures" to describe scriptures determined to have been composed in China or elsewhere (including India) and leave the question of their conformance to orthodoxy – that is to say, their apocryphal status – to theologians.

POLITICAL AND SHIFTING NATURE OF ORTHODOXY

I mentioned that the category of "deviant teaching" or "deviant text" was heavily influenced by changing standards of orthodoxy, standards that swayed in the winds of contemporary political considerations; for, as noted earlier, imperial authority and canonical authority were intimately intertwined. This is what happened to the texts of the Sanjiejiao 三階教 or the Three Levels movement. They were included within the register of canonical texts in two catalogs but considered aberrant in at least two others and, as recent manuscript discoveries in Japan show, they were restored to the canon once more in 800, only to be yet again kicked out in a later version of the very same catalog that had restored them to canonical status and, ironically, continued to be copied as part of the canon in Japan until at least the thirteenth century. Let me turn, then, to the Three Levels as an example of getting "kicked out of the canon."

THE THREE LEVELS MOVEMENT

The Three Levels movement took form during the turbulent years preceding the Sui reunification of the Chinese empire (581–617). The 300 years of continuous warfare and cultural change prior to the Sui saw both imperial suppressions of the Buddhist church and the emergence of new and indigenous expressions of Buddhist doctrine, practice, and institution. Indeed, it was one of the most fertile epochs in Chinese Buddhist history, setting the patterns for the more formal systematizations of Chinese Buddhist schools in later dynasties. Xinxing 信行 (540–94), the founder of Three Levels, incorporated many of those new directions in his movement, and thus their study sheds much light on an early stage of these indigenous Chinese contributions to the Buddhist tradition.

Precisely because its doctrines so well reflected the concerns of the times, the Three Levels movement was immediately popular in the capital city of Changan, and it counted among its patrons powerful statesmen, imperial princes, and even Empress Wu 武則天 (624–715), the only woman ever to occupy the imperial throne in China. The movement

was also extremely popular among the masses, and there are secular records of throngs of people attending their temples in the capital as well as in the provinces.

In spite of their popularity and the inclusion of their writings in the canon of 597, subsequent records detail five separate imperial suppressions of Three Levels texts and practices between 600 and 725. From the various sūtra catalogs:

(a) *Record of the Three Jewels through the Ages* (*Lidai sanbao ji* 歷代三寶紀; 597) records their texts in the catalog of works composed during the Sui dynasty.

(b) *The Great Tang Record Scripture Catalog* (*Datang neidian lu* 大唐內典; (664) also records their texts in the catalog of works composed during the Sui dynasty as well as the catalog of commentaries composed by monks and laity.

(c) *The Catalog Authorized by Great Zhou* (*Dazhou kanding zhongjing mulu* 大周刊定衆經目; 695), compiled at the orders of Empress Wu, lists their texts in the register of spurious sūtras and specifically labels them "heterodox," yiduan 異端.

(d) *The Record of Śākyamuni's Teaching* (*Kaiyuan shijiao lu* 開元釋教録; 730) records Three Levels texts in the catalog of the "spurious and false that confuse the true" (偽妄亂真錄), restricts some of their practices, and notes the agreement to "exclude them as a message for the future."

(e) *The Catalog of Buddhist Teachings Newly Established in the Zhenyuan Era* (*Zhenyuan xinding shijiao mulu* 貞元新定釋教目録; 800) is somewhat confusing, as it lists Sanjie texts in three different places: a chronological catalog of works composed during the Sui, the catalog of doubtful texts, and the catalog of the canon.

The Record of Śākyamuni's Teaching, the fourth catalog listed, was particularly influential, and the result of its including the Three Levels records in the listing of spurious works was that the movement finally died out and, as with most texts labeled spurious or deviant in the catalogs, all of their scriptures were lost, no longer copied or circulated as part of the official canon (at least in China). It is hard to know the exact causes of such persistent imperial hostility, although they probably include such things as their rather strident and exclusivist claims to doctrinal relevancy, the economic success and popularity of the movement and, perhaps more than anything, its proximity to power – its first suppression, in 600, for example, occurred immediately after the fall from power of its patron Gaoying 高穎, the finance minister of the Sui who had donated his palace for its first temple.

Two other suppressions came at the hands of Empress Wu, who was also one of its institutional supporters. Perhaps Wu turned against Sanjie because one of their followers was involved in a rebellion or, more interestingly, her failed attempt to duplicate the success of their social welfare activities in her own "family temple" (Hubbard 2001). I think that we can say that both the ephemeral nature of orthodoxy and the political nature of canonicity are clearly shown by the treatment accorded the movement of the Three Levels.

At any rate, the historical record of the Three Levels movement begins to dim after its final suppression in 725, for the damning record of the authoritative *Record of Śākyamuni's Teaching* was passed down in subsequent catalogs, so that before long the little that was known of the Three Levels movement came, ironically, from those few records in the very catalogs that condemned it and the occasional polemic directed at it in the writings of other sectarian movements. The closure of the canon was compounded with the transition from the manuscript period to the printed canon in the tenth century – printed canons that were largely based on the *Record of Śākyamuni's Teaching*. This closure was also compounded

by the fact that these printed versions of the canon were virtually always published by the state through the seventeenth century, thus bringing the full weight of imperial authority to their judgments. Until the discovery of a huge cache of manuscripts, including many such banished and lost texts, in the caves of the oasis town of Dunhuang at the beginning of this century, we knew little more about this popular movement than I have just described. Again this is ironic – and it also speaks to the power that the catalogs had in determining the shape of the canon and especially the physical preservation of texts – because the Three Levels treatises were restored to canonical status in the later *Zhenyuan Catalog* that was often used in Japan as the source of a temple's collection of scriptures, they continued to be copied in Japan as late as the twelfth century.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, I can note that as scholars our relation to questions of orthodoxy and canonicity is obviously rather different than that of early Buddhists or the Chinese catalogers. To begin with, we could simply note the fact that the presence of disagreement and controversy is precisely the sort of evidence that helps us chart the development of the Buddhist tradition. Indeed, we now look at indigenous scriptures, including texts deemed deviant (as with the Sanjie texts), as ways to understand and map Chinese innovations, distinctly from their fidelity to Indic sources. These indigenous developments are exactly what are documented in the works deemed spurious by the catalogers as well as other scriptures that, while long accepted by the official catalogs, have been shown by modern scholarship to be in fact indigenous works. Just as all Mahāyāna scriptures are spuriously attributed to the Buddha, some of the most influential works in East Asia are indigenous – that is, scriptures composed in China and falsely attributed to Indic originals, sometimes allowed into the canon and sometimes judged doubtful or spurious. These include scriptures such as the *Brahma's Net Discourse*, which became the norm for monastic life in East Asia; the *Discourse on the Adamantine Meditative Concentration* (*Vajrasamādhi Sūtra*; *Chin kang san mei ching lun* 金剛三昧經論) of the Zen school; *The Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* (*Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論), a seminal text for all of East Asian Buddhism; the *Meditation Discourse (Guan Wuliang shou jing* 觀無量壽經), foundational for the Pure Land school; and many more. Today, as with the Dead Sea Scrolls, Nag Hamadi texts, and other recently discovered manuscripts of early Christianity, the study of indigenous scriptures has become one of the most important fields in Buddhist Studies.

Hence I would simply like to reiterate my opening point: although the Buddhist tradition has long been seen as doctrinally tolerant and as having little concern for the sort of closed canon assumed of other religions, in fact Buddhists everywhere and at all times have been concerned with both orthodoxy as well as canonicity. I think that recognizing this allows us to make the observation that those who see Buddhism as more concerned with orthopraxy than orthodoxy are themselves espousing a form of orthodoxy; that is, an attempt to prescribe what is in fact the True Teaching and guard it against what they see to be the deadening effect of concern with scripture and its study. On the other hand, though, the recognition that Buddhist concern for orthodoxy and canonicity is in fact evidence of diversity and a way to chart developments in the tradition also means that, in the end, there has been no single orthodoxy or canon that prevailed. In fact, in the Buddhist tradition, orthodoxy and canonical open-endedness go hand in hand. I suspect that the same is true for other religions.

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LANGUAGE

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Mario D'Amato

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism has sometimes been referred to as the most psychological of the world's religions. This observation might be further extended to say that it may also be the most semiotically oriented of the religions of the world, insofar as it exhibits a sustained interest in understanding, and ultimately altering, the way that the mind engages with the world through signs, concepts, and language. Indeed, according to one form of Mahāyāna Buddhist thought, "the world" just is processes of mental engagement with representations (i.e., the doctrine of *vijñapti-mātra*, or "representation-only"). Discussing the Theravāda tradition, Richard Gombrich (1996: 4) states that the Buddha's teachings "were so clearly nominalist that for over a thousand years Buddhist philosophy maintained the tradition that things as we conceive of them and talk about them are mere conceptualisations, mere labels – *prajñapti-mātra.*" This essay will offer an overview of the relation of Buddhism to language, primarily aiming to present a framework for thinking about the various ways in which different forms of Buddhism have approached the topic. More specifically, the intent will be to highlight a tension in Buddhist thought between the critique of language and perspectives emphasizing its salvific power. Furthermore, some thoughts will be presented regarding how these two competing tendencies in Buddhist approaches to language might be interpreted, attempting to view them as other than directly opposed to one another.

THE CONTEXTS OF LANGUAGE

It would first be useful to contextualize Buddhist approaches to language by situating the discussion within some broader concerns. The topic of Buddhism and language may be discussed within two distinct contexts: first, the context of the relation between religion and language in general; and second, the more specific context of speculative thought in India on the nature of language. Regarding the first of these, the anthropologist Roy A. Rappaport offers some insightful thoughts on the ways in which religion and language might be intimately connected. In *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, Rappaport presents a theory that is nothing less than an attempt to explain the very emergence and development of religion as intrinsically linked to the origins of human language use. Starting from the

perspective that language is a basic fact of human existence, Rappaport (1999: 5) emphasizes that the advent of language use endowed the species homo sapiens with significant and far-reaching adaptive advantages: "language and proto-language before it have been absolutely central to human evolutionary success. It would not, indeed, be an exaggeration to claim that humanity is their creation." However, what is often overlooked, Rappaport argues, is that fundamental problems also emerge along with language, and primary among these are the problem of "the lie" and the problem of "Babel"; i.e., along with language's impressive power to represent comes the capacity to *misrepresent* (the problem of "the lie"); furthermore, while language offers a means of envisioning a variety of alternatives, it is not always clear precisely *which alternative* is to be affirmed as "the right one" (the problem of the confusion of "Babel"). Rappaport (1999: 15) argues that religion emerged along with (and as a result of) language and served to mitigate the harmful effects of the lie and Babel: "aspects of religion, particularly as generated in ritual, ameliorate problems of falsehood intrinsic to language to a degree sufficient to allow human sociability to have developed and to be maintained." So in some sense it might be said that Rappaport understands religion to be an adaptation of language to reduce the problematic effects of language.

Interestingly, Buddhism itself exhibits a tendency toward reflecting on the problems inherent in language, as may be seen for example in its denial of the ultimate existence of the referential objects of conventional language, such as "the self." Furthermore, some Buddhist practices may be interpreted as a means for mitigating (or even eliminating) certain mental tendencies that arise along with language, tendencies toward attachment to the objects posited by it. This orientation toward reflecting on language may be understood as related to Buddhism's tendency toward process-oriented philosophy, i.e., wherein the analysis of reality is conducted in terms of *processes* rather than *substances*; and this orientation toward reflection on language should also be interpreted in terms of the more general interest in this topic exhibited in the Indian intellectual tradition in this period. Indeed, speculative thought regarding the nature of language had already evolved to a fairly sophisticated level in India even before the development of Buddhism.

In considering the context of Indian reflections on the nature of language, it is important to point out that speculation on language may be found even in the earliest Indian literature, the Vedas, including the *Ṛg Veda* (dated to ca. 1200 BCE) (Arapura and Kunjunni Raja 1990). Indeed, in that text *Vāc* ("Speech") appears as a deity, one that "is more a faculty of semiosis and poesis, rather than of speech alone" (Matilal and Panda 1997: 1827). Attention to language was considered to be essential to the entire religious system upheld by the Vedic tradition, since the precise recitation of Vedic Sanskrit texts was understood to be necessary for ensuring the efficacy of the ritual system: the "primary motive and theme of the body of [Vedic] literature was ritualistic"; the Vedic mantras were "the artifact of communication with the supernatural powers" and the means to the "realization of the significance of life in this world" (Matilal and Panda 1997: 1827). And while the entire Vedic ritual system would of course come to be rejected by the nonorthodox (*nāstika*, i.e., non-Vedic) systems such as Buddhism, the emphasis on linguistic knowledge and speculation on the nature of language continued to exert an influence on the general development of Indian thought, whether orthodox or nonorthodox.

Following from this focus on the nature of language, the study of grammar and other linguistic sciences came to assume an important place in Indian intellectual thought generally, even from an early stage. Thus by "the end of the Vedic period, we encounter four branches of linguistic studies: *śikṣā* (phonetics), *nirukta* (etymology), *vyākaraṇa*

(grammar), and *chandas* (metrics)" (Matilal and Panda 1997: 1830). Of these four, the study of grammar continued to receive the most attention, up to and beyond the composition of the definitive grammatical treatise of the Sanskrit language, the *Aṣṭādhyāyī* by Pāṇini (ca. fifth or fourth century BCE). It is clear that Pāṇini drew upon an extended grammatical tradition that preceded him, since he makes reference to ten earlier authorities in his work (Staal 2001: 466). This tradition would continue beyond Pāṇini, and in fact it eventually gave rise to an entire philosophical tradition, the philosophical school of the Grammarians, or Vyākaraṇa, which developed theories on the nature of language, meaning, and metaphor, as well as systematic thought on metaphysics, epistemology, and soteriology (Coward and Kunjunni Raja 1990).

The role of the grammatical tradition in the general development of Indian philosophy should not be underestimated, since in many ways the rigor of the grammatical sciences served as a model for further thought in ontology, epistemology, logic, etc. As Ingalls (1954) argues, while the paradigm of reasoning for the Greeks was mathematics, the paradigm of reasoning for the Indians was grammatical theory, and linguistic studies had an impact on both the form and content of Indian thought in other domains. So the intellectual environment in which Buddhism first emerged and developed was significantly influenced by the grammatical tradition. For example, in discussing the early Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250 CE) and his "indebtedness to the grammarians," Hayes (1994: 353) states that "hardly a single argument used by Nāgārjuna was unknown to the grammatical tradition." And this indebtedness is evident in the works of other Buddhist thinkers, both in terms of how they drew upon the grammatical tradition and in terms of the sophistication of their views on language.

This sophistication may be seen, for example, in the doctrines of some forms of Abhidharma philosophy (see the chapter on this topic by Walser in this volume). Abhidharma thought, considered to be the earliest systematic Buddhist doctrinal discourse, makes a standard distinction between secondary and primary existents: secondary existents (e.g., the conventional objects that make up the world) are mere designations or conceptual constructions that are ultimately reducible to primary existents (viz., the momentary events or *dharma*s that comprise secondary existents). The Sarvāstivāda school of Abhidharma posits a set of five categories of primary existents: form (*rūpa*), consciousness (*citta*), mental factors (*caitta*s), factors not associated with mind (*citta-viprayukta-saṃskāra*s), and the unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*); this scheme, as Erich Frauwallner (1995: 146) states, "represents an attempt to record exhaustively all the elements of being and order them systematically." Interestingly, language – analyzed in terms of phonemes, words, and sentences – is considered to belong to the fourth category: factors not associated with mind (Pruden 1991: 250–54). At first pass, it might be thought that language should be classified along with form, because it is comprised of sounds, which are physical events; but language entails more than the vocal sounds used to communicate it: these alone do not encompass the signifying effect of language. On the other hand, it might be expected that language would be classified as a mental factor; however, mental factors are understood to occur in connection with events of consciousness and to be individuated into distinct mental streams, wherein one mental continuum would comprise what is conventionally referred to as "the mind" of a sentient being. But clearly language must be more than just mental episodes occurring in the distinct cognitive streams of sentient beings: language must also exist as a system, with its own rules. As Ferdinand de Saussure (1986: 14) puts it, there must be a distinction between *langue* as a system, and *parole* which encompasses all its distinct

episodes of use. Language itself as a system, then, must exist beyond any particular vocal articulations (physical events) or linguistic thoughts (mental events). To state this in Fregean terms, language is part of a "third realm": "neither external 'concrete' things nor mental entities" (Rosen 2009). So for the Sarvāstivāda Abhidharma, since language is distinct from the physical and mental realms, it cannot be classified as form, nor can it be placed in the categories of consciousness or mental factors; rather, it was categorized with factors not associated with mind.

Before finally turning to the analysis of Buddhist perspectives on language, the overview of broader contexts should conclude with some preliminary points of information regarding Buddhism and language, starting with what may be known about the linguistic context in which Buddhism first arose. Buddhism began in the Indian subcontinent, along the Ganges basin, in the sixth or fifth century BCE, so the dominant languages in this region during this period were Indo-Aryan ones of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages. At the time of the Buddha, the Indian "subcontinent was gradually being 'Sanskritized'" by Indo-Aryan peoples who "were now spreading their language (Sanskrit, or Old Indo-Aryan) east and south, along with the religious culture of the Brahmin priesthood" (Collins 2001: 15). While Sanskrit was the prestige language of learning of the Brahmins in this milieu, other languages referred to as Prakrits (i.e., forms of Middle Indo-Aryan) were spoken as native languages in this region. It is not entirely certain, however, what the Buddha's native tongue was, or what language or languages were first used to propagate Buddhist teachings, although it is generally thought that the Dharma was initially taught in some form of Prakrit, perhaps Māgadhī (or Ardha-Māgadhī), which was an eastern Prakrit (unlike Pāli, which was a western Prakrit and a literary language; Norman 2001: 206; cf. Lancaster 2001 and Bechert 1980).

According to Buddhist tradition, the Buddha did not emphasize that the Dharma should be preserved and transmitted in any particular tongue. In the Pāli canon the Buddha specifically states that his teaching should not be conveyed in *chandas*, a term that usually means "verse" but in this context may be understood to refer to Vedic Sanskrit, the metered Sanskrit in which the Vedic texts were preserved by Brahmins (Gombrich 2009: 146, citing *Vinaya* II: 139; cf. Lamotte 1988: 552); hence the tradition records the Buddha as resisting the formalization of the Dharma in the prestige language of the Brahmin orthodoxy. In fact, as has been pointed out, "No particular language had, for the Buddha, a privileged status, as Sanskrit certainly had for Brahmins" (Onians 2001: 289). Gombrich summarizes the implication here as follows: "the Buddha's attitude to the use of language was pragmatic: his purpose was purely to convey meaning, and anything that might impede communication was to be discarded" (2009: 148). This approach has been followed by various Buddhist traditions, and it has been generally accepted by most forms of Buddhism that translations of Buddhist texts into other languages would qualify as entirely acceptable vehicles of the Dharma.

Buddhist texts were indeed composed in and translated into various languages, including forms of Prakrit (e.g., Pāli), Sanskritized Prakrits (sometimes referred to as "Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit"), classical Sanskrit, Iranian languages (e.g., Sogdian and Khotanese), Chinese, Tibetan, Mongolian, etc. The move toward Sanskrit in Indian Buddhism may be understood in terms of the general ascendency of Sanskrit as the language of learning in the Indian subcontinent; as Lancaster (2001: 115) points out, since Sanskrit gradually became the *lingua franca* of India, "Buddhism followed the trend by putting its texts into this language rather than the Prakrits which were more locally fixed." There are currently extant

canonical collections of Buddhist texts in various languages, including a number of works preserved in Sanskrit; but the three primary canonical collections are in Pāli (some 57 volumes in the Pali Text Society edition, including indexes), Chinese (some 32 volumes of Indic texts in the Taishō edition), and Tibetan (some 100 volumes in the Kangyur [*bKa' 'gyur*], which includes texts considered to be the word of the Buddha, and more than 200 volumes in the Tengyur [*bsTan 'gyur*], which includes Indic treatises by Buddhist masters). The Pāli canon is the earliest of these; according to the Theravāda tradition, the origins of this collection can be traced to a council of elder monks held shortly after the Buddha's demise; this school also holds that the Pāli canon was transmitted orally (through memorization and recitation) during the first centuries of its history and was first committed to writing in the first century BCE. Translations of Buddhist texts into Chinese from Indic languages began in the second century CE and continued over a period of centuries; various canonical collections of Chinese Buddhist texts were created, and one of the more significant of these is the Taishō edition, compiled in Japan in the twentieth century (see the chapter by Hubbard in this volume). Translations into Tibetan began in the seventh century CE and also continued for centuries; and while there are various editions of both the Kangyur and Tengyur, one of the most widely used is the Derge (sDe dge) edition, which was printed in Tibet in the eighteenth century. While the Pāli, Chinese, and Tibetan canons are particularly important, it should again be noted that there are literally thousands of extant Buddhist texts in a variety of languages.

BUDDHIST APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE

In its history of some two and half millennia extending across a range of cultural milieus, Buddhism has developed a vast array of perspectives on language. Given the diversity of Buddhist approaches to language, the aim here will not be to offer detailed summaries of all of them, but rather to present and elucidate one possible framework for interpreting Buddhist views of language. In his essay on "Buddhism and Language," Luis Gómez (1987: 446) points out that even from an "early stage there is already a tendency to identify language with 'discursive or conceptual thought,' and to identify the latter with erroneous knowledge"; however, he also emphasizes that "Buddhism would reveal a number of important strands within its tradition that depend heavily, or focus primarily, on some concept of sacred language."

Similarly, in his overview of Buddhist semiotics, Fabio Rambelli (1998: 94) presents a distinction between a perspective that holds that "ultimate communication through language is not possible," a view "later developed in particular by some Chan and Zen currents, which rigorously attempted to deconstruct and dissolve every semiosic practice"; and a perspective according to which "the Buddha uses a peculiar language consisting in a special system of signs," one in which "absolute truth can be communicated."

In discussing Buddhist attitudes to language in Indian Buddhism, Steven Collins (2001: 15) indicates that for Buddhists "it was important for metaphysical and spiritual reasons that language should be … merely a matter of 'conventional truth'; 'ultimate truth' was beyond words altogether"; however, he points out that "other attitudes to and uses of language" also emerged in Buddhism, including the recitation of certain canonical texts for "ceremonies of 'protection' (*paritta*)," uses that, Collins states, "may be called magical, in the sense that the language itself is credited with intrinsic and automatic practical efficacy." And in his work on *Buddhism and Language*, José Cabezón draws upon Michel de Certeau's study of

mysticism, especially emphasizing the tension de Certeau points out in mystical literature between the "waning of trust in discourse" and the "assurance that the spoken word cannot be lacking" (de Certeau quoted in Cabezón 1994: 173). Cabezón states that in Tibetan Buddhism, the Buddha's awareness "is said to be nonconceptual," which "is a clear indication that conceptual thought must eventually be transcended"; he goes on to indicate, however, that "the fact that language and conceptual thought are limited in this way does not … vitiate the fact that such linguistic-conceptual understanding is indispensible in the spiritual journey that culminates in buddhahood" (1994: 175). Thus Cabezón sees an opposition between distrust of language and belief in the power of language at work in Tibetan Buddhist discourse as well.

Building from these accounts, it would be possible to outline a distinction between two competing tendencies in Buddhist approaches to language: on the one hand, a tendency toward the "critique of language," viewing it as problematic, even as a barrier to the attainment of the ultimate spiritual goal; and on the other hand, a tendency toward affirming the "salvific power of language," approaching it as a positive and powerful force with the capacity to bring about salvation. The following sections of this essay will attempt to further explain each of these two trajectories in Buddhist perspectives on language. It will then conclude with some reflections on whether it might be possible to close the gap between them to some degree, by considering whether they might actually converge in some respect.

THE CRITIQUE OF LANGUAGE

The tendency toward the critique of language in Buddhism can be seen even in one of the earliest statements of Buddhist doctrine, the twelvefold chain of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*). This lays out the causal factors that give rise to the continued suffering of sentient beings through the round of rebirth, specifying the fourth factor as "name and form" (*nāma-rūpa*), which seemingly implicates the linguistic process of naming as a contributing factor in the unsatisfactoriness of conditioned existence. Later Buddhist tradition would identify name and form with the five aggregates (*skandha*), taking "form" as comprising the aggregate of form, and "name" as comprising the latter four aggregates, viz., feeling, conceptualization, dispositions, and consciousness. Gombrich (2009: 136) argues, however, that "this can hardly be correct" and that the Buddhist tradition "did not understand how the Buddha had appropriated this term *nāma-rūpa* from the *Upaniṣad*s." Drawing upon the work of Joanna Jurewicz, Gombrich (2009: 135) states that the term *nāma-rūpa* should rather be understood to highlight the process that leads "to further individuation, until we reach the multiplicity of our experience: individuation both by name (*nāma*), using a linguistic category, and by appearance (*rūpa*), perceptible to the senses." This process of individuation and multiplicity "has only the negative value of an act which hinders cognition" (Jurewicz quoted in Gombrich 2009: 137) and thus may be understood to follow directly from the first factor of the twelvefold chain, i.e., ignorance (*avidyā*). Gombrich also understands the term *nāma-rūpa* to be related to another Upaniṣadic concept that is adopted and reinterpreted by Buddhism, viz., *prapañca* (Pāli, *papañca*; often translated as "conceptual proliferation," the tendency to "conceptualize multiplicity"); and he interprets the Buddhist appropriation and reinterpretation of both concepts in terms of Buddhism "denying that we can distinguish, either perceptually or linguistically, between clear-cut *substances*" (Gombrich 2009: 206): language cannot finally connect to any intrinsically existent referential objects. Thus concepts and language are understood as

valid only from a conventional perspective; as the *Dīghanakha Sutta* states, a monk whose mind is liberated "employs the speech currently used in the world without adhering to it" (Ñāṇamoli and Bodhi 1995: 606).

The Buddhist critique of language apparent even in Pāli texts has been interpreted by Gombrich and others as illustrative of an apophatic tendency running throughout many forms of Buddhist discourse. Some strands of Buddhist thought emphasize that any and all linguistic formulations ultimately fail to represent the way things really are and consider the removal of all views to be a means of attaining the ultimate spiritual goal. Gómez (1976: 140) states, "Contrary to the customary insistence on 'right views,'" one significant early Theravāda text "speaks of giving up *all* views." Similarly, according to one noteworthy passage from the *Suttanipāta*, "The [true] Brahmin does not construct and adopt conceptualizations, or hold as essential any view" (translated in Gómez 2000: 113). Collins (1982: 87) points out that Theravāda discourse identifies two ways in which Buddhism "seeks to counter what it sees as mistaken views": one approach, "which might be described as quietistic, recommends exclusive concentration on religious practice, avoiding any speculative thought," while another approach counters a mistaken view by putting forward a correct "opposing theory," which is understood as the "right view." The apophatic tendency noted above correlates with what Collins refers to as the quietistic approach, one exemplified by the trope of Buddhist teaching as a raft, i.e., that the Dharma is a means for spiritual attainment but that it too should be left behind after having served its purpose.

The themes of the critique of language and the removal of all views are further emphasized in Mahāyāna thought. For example, one important Mahāyāna discourse (*sūtra*), the *Discourse on the Instructions of Vimalakīrti* (*Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra*), states that the root of the basic afflictions is "unreal conceptual construction" (*abhūta-parikalpa*); and the commentary to the *Ornament for Great Vehicle Discourses* (*Mahāyānasūtrālaṃkāra*) states that conceptual discrimination (*vikalpa*) is the only affliction of concern to those on the path to the awakening of a buddha (D'Amato 2009: 42). Indeed, as Williams (1980) points out, according to a significant stream of Mahāyāna philosophy the fundamental cause of suffering, or the fundamental problem to be overcome, is some form of conceptualization (*saṃjñā*), conceptual discrimination (*vikalpa*), conceptual construction (*parikalpa*), or conceptual proliferation (*prapañca*) – all terms that are intimately connected with the functioning of language. In discussing the Pāli term *saññā*, Gombrich (2009: 145) points out that it "is the application of language to one's experience," and that "'name' is the basic meaning of the equivalent word in Sanskrit, *saṃjñā*." Similarly, Cabezón (1994: 119) indicates that according to Mahāyāna accounts, "language and conceptualization are two sides of the same coin – mirror images, as it were. Whatever statements can be formulated of conceptual thought can be isomorphically translated into statements about language and vice versa." And Georges Dreyfus (1997: 218) states, "For Buddhist epistemologists, language and thought (*kalpanā*, [Tib.] *rtog pa*) are intimately related to the extent that they are often equated … Language signifies through conceptual mediation in the same way thought conceives of things." So according to one strand of Mahāyāna soteriology, language and conceptualization are considered to be the very root of what binds beings to cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*). Thus it may be understood that the Mahāyāna goal of the unsurpassed awakening of a buddha is often described in terms of a nonconceptual awareness (*nirvikalpa-jñāna*), one that does not engage in conceptual-linguistic thought.

The Mahāyāna tendency toward the removal of all views is further illustrated by other tropes found in Mahāyāna literature, e.g., that the proper view of the Dharma is giving up

all views, that Buddhist doctrine is like one illusory king defeating another, the statement found in many Mahāyāna sūtras that the Buddha never uttered a word, the Yogācāra claim that when the Buddhist analysis of the nature of things has done its work it will itself be consumed in the flames of nonconceptualization, and the Madhyamaka account of the ultimate goal as the cessation of all conceptual proliferation (*sarva-prapañca-upaśama*) (D'Amato 2008a, 2008b, and 2009). As Matthew Kapstein (2001: 13–14) states, the Madhyamaka doctrine of emptiness "is sometimes said to dispense with all expressed tenets, even this one," which may be interpreted as a "sceptical view of the referential capacity of language and conceptual activity." He further points out that "'emptiness' cannot be understood primarily in propositional, or 'theoretical' terms": emptiness itself is not another view, but the end of all views.

The inability of words to actually refer to things is a theme that also runs throughout many forms of Buddhist discourse, and it is probably most fully articulated in Yogācāra philosophy, including the epistemological branches of this tradition developed by Dignāga (ca. 480–540 CE) and Dharmakīrti (ca. 600–660 CE). In Yogācāra discourse, reality is variously referred to as inexpressible (*anabhilapyatā*), signless (*animitta*), nondiscursive (*niṣprapañcatā*), and without conceptual discrimination (*avikalpa*). Words and language do not refer to actual objects; rather, they are to be viewed as mental constructions, and all mental constructions are ultimately unreal. The Yogācāra critique of language may be understood in terms of the doctrine of the three natures (*trisvabhāva*): i.e., the imagined nature (*parikalpita-svabhāva*), the dependent nature (*paratantra-svabhāva*), and the perfected nature (*pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*). The imagined nature refers to reality as constructed through language and conceptualization; it is "the falsifying activity of language … the realm of words which attribute inherent existence to things" (Williams 1989: 83). The dependent nature, on the other hand, refers to the causally dependent flow of representations, or the "dependent origination of phenomena" (from the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra*; Powers 1995: 83). And the perfected nature refers to reality as it truly is, unmediated by conceptualization; it is described as "'thusness' (*tathatā*), the true nature of things, which is discovered in meditation" (Williams 1989: 84). The three natures may be interpreted as three different levels of semiosis, starting with the conventional conceptual-linguistic semiosis of the imagined, moving through a realization of the causally interdependent flow of illusory appearances that are nothing but representations (*vijñapti-mātra*) in the dependent, and finally arriving at the awakened awareness of the perfected, which is an awareness of thusness without conceptual-linguistic mediation (D'Amato 2003). This Yogācāra critique of language would reach its most sophisticated formulation in the doctrine of "exclusion" (*apoha*), a notion first put forward by Dignāga: "The basic idea of this doctrine is that a word, having no direct reference to any real entity, functions merely to differentiate an object from other things" (Hattori 2000: 137). (Again regarding the indebtedness of Buddhist philosophy to the Indian grammatical tradition, it may be noted that in his work Dignāga drew upon Bhartṛhari [ca. 450–510 CE], one of the central figures of the philosophical school of the Grammarians.)

A common theme in each of these Buddhist approaches to the critique of language is the absence of any referent for words and language. As stated elsewhere, in a discussion of a Mahāyāna approach to apophasis:

> According to Buddhist metaphysics, conditioned phenomena – phenomena which comprise "the world," including whatever we refer to as "the self" – are radically

impermanent and without inherent nature or essence. Signs, on the other hand, function to posit stable entities where there are none, affixing inherent natures onto hypostatized existents. While phenomena are in flux, signs posit enduring objects. While phenomena are without essence, signs posit essential natures. Signs point to a realm of stable referents, but the purported "objects" to which they refer are always on the move.

<div align="right">(D'Amato 2008a: 22)</div>

Or to return to the perspective of the Pāli texts, in the words of Gombrich (2009: 148):

The Buddha's view of language was … basic to his metaphysics. If there are no unchanging entities but only processes, how can words have a fixed and determinate relationship to reality? All our apperceptions, he says, are empty … In this context, the term "empty" denotes this lack of an unchanging essence, applying it to everything … [which] is the generalization to all phenomena of the "no soul" principle.

Thus in its general outlines the Buddhist critique of language can be seen as fundamental to various forms of the tradition and to be closely related to Buddhist perspectives on the very nature of reality.

THE SALVIFIC POWER OF LANGUAGE

The range of Buddhist perspectives on language of course encompasses more than the critique of language. After all, Buddhist teaching itself could only be made available to the world through words and language, so every form of Buddhism entails some belief in its salvific power, at least in a minimal sense. For example, the Madhyamaka Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna states, "Ultimate truth (*paramārtha*) cannot be taught without resorting to conventional expressions (*vyavahāra*)" (translated in Eckel 1978: 328); thus while the goal may be the cessation of conceptual proliferation, this can only be achieved by relying on language. As Cabezón (1994: 139) points out, although forms of Tibetan Buddhism aim at realizing the nonconceptual awareness of a buddha, engaging with language and conceptual thought is considered to be a necessary prerequisite for the path. Indeed many Mahāyāna texts distinguish between three progressive stages of realization of wisdom – developed through hearing (*śruta*), reflecting upon (*cintā*), and cultivating (*bhāvanā*) the teachings – and the first two certainly involve conceptual-linguistic thought. So even for Buddhist traditions emphasizing the critique of language, it must be affirmed as a necessary propaedeutic dimension of the path, sometimes considered to be a form of skillful means (*upāya-kauśalya*). This sense of the spiritual utility of language might also be seen more generally across Buddhist traditions in the affirmation of right speech (*samyag-vāc*) as one of the elements of the noble eightfold path and in the avowal of the three jewels of Buddha, Dharma, and Monastic Community (*Saṃgha*), wherein the Dharma might at least *prima facie* be understood to comprise a set of conceptual-linguistic propositions.

But there is another side to Buddhist approaches to language as well, one that positively affirms its positive value, and even views it as a vehicle of salvific power. Gómez (1987: 447–48) points to a number of traditions that emphasize the sacred power of language, including for example the idea that when a bodhisattva makes a solemn vow (*praṇidhāna*) this may function as an "act of truth," whereby the very expression of the will of a virtuous being can be made into fact; or the notion expressed in various Mahāyāna sūtras that any

site where the *Perfection of Wisdom Discourses* (*Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*s) are preserved may be considered a reliquary and that a copy of one of these sūtras may itself serve as a "living relic of the Buddha"; or the employment of formulas such as *mantra*s or *dhāraṇī*s, understood as a "condensation of the sacred power of the enlightened," and used as "protective formulas as well as instruments of meditation." Gómez (1987: 449) also highlights the positive value placed on language in traditions such as Pure Land Buddhism, wherein "invocation" of the name of the Buddha Amitābha "itself becomes the primary practice"; or Nichiren Buddhism, where the recitation of the title of the *Lotus Sūtra* "becomes the powerful source of all spiritual and material well-being"; or Buddhist Tantra, in which "one can rightly speak of 'the word as icon' … a multivalued icon embodying a system of sacred identities" that must be realized for the attainment of the state of buddhahood. Thus a significant tendency in Buddhism to emphasize the salvific power of language can be noted alongside various critiques of language.

As alluded to in the discussion of critiques of language, some Mahāyāna sūtras make the claim that the Buddha never uttered a word; for example, the *Descent into Laṅka Discourse* (*Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*) states: "From the night that the Tathāgata was fully awakened till the night that he attained parinirvāṇa, the Tathāgata never uttered a single word, nor will he ever speak" (D'Amato 2009: 52, note 2). Such a statement may in itself be understood as a critique of the "Hīnayāna" claim that "whatever the Tathāgata speaks, utters and proclaims from the day of his perfect enlightenment up to the day when he utterly passes away into the Nibbāna-element without residue left – all that is just so and not otherwise" (*Aṅguttara-nikāya* 4.23; Thera and Bodhi 1999: 83). But one may also note other Buddhist texts that state that the Buddha taught the entire doctrine by uttering one single sound: by pronouncing a single word, even a single syllable, the entire doctrine was made manifest to sentient beings. For example, according to a Mahāsāṃghika doctrine, "the Buddha makes use of a single sound (*ekavāgudāhāra*) to utter all doctrines" (Lamotte 1988: 551). And one *Prajñāpāramitā* text condenses the entire vast corpus of the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras into a single letter: "Ānanda, do receive, for the sake of the weal and happiness of all beings, this Perfection of Wisdom in one letter, i.e. 'A'" (Conze 1993: 201). In a similar vein, the *Flower Garland Discourse* (*Avataṃsaka-sūtra*) presents the image of a Mahāyāna sūtra as the urtext of the whole of reality, on which "would be recorded all things without exceptions in this world system of three-thousandfold multi-thousand worlds"; the *Avataṃsaka* adds that this "sūtra scroll, as large as this world system of three-thousandfold multi-thousand worlds … would be contained in a minute particle of dust" (translated in Gómez 1995: 108–109), thus collapsing the entire universe into a single point, which itself contains the most expansive Mahāyāna sūtra conceivable. Such claims may be understood as emphasizing the salvific power of language – its seemingly magical ability to present the entire Dharma in a single sound or letter – and its unlimited potential to bring about the salvation of sentient beings.

One particularly powerful manifestation of the tendency to emphasize the salvific power of language may be seen in the thought of Kūkai 空海 (774–835 CE), the noted scholar-monk who is considered to be the founder of the Shingon 真言 sect of Japanese Buddhism. Kūkai's thought provides a striking counterpoint to the Yogācāra critique of language insofar as he emphasizes the "identity of language and reality" and presents the doctrine of *hosshin seppō* 法身説法 (Rambelli 1998: 95), or "the preaching of the *dharmakāya* ('embodiment of the Dharma)," wherein the *dharmakāya* is understood to refer to buddhahood as it is in itself, in terms of its own eternal nature. Kūkai states, "All sorts of

names (signs) originate with the Dharmakāya. They all issue forth from it (him) and become the languages circulating in the world" (translated in Abé 1999: 286). Far from viewing language as a barrier to the realization of the ultimate goals of Buddhism, Kūkai sees it as a manifestation of the ultimate embodiment of buddhahood. Indeed Kūkai relates this notion to the doctrine of the primordial salvation of all beings: "all sentient beings are endowed with the originally enlightened Dharmakāya (*hongaku hosshin*), his self-nature, and are equal to all Buddhas" (translated in Abé 1999: 286–87); thus all sentient beings have the capacity to instruct all other sentient beings about their own fundamental awakened nature: "every thing and every event in the universe, as objects of our six senses, are the Buddha's preaching of the Dharma." And while a conventional approach to language may occlude the truth about things, Kūkai claims that through Shingon Buddhism it is possible to directly receive the teachings of the *dharmakāya*, "the timeless and absolute, cosmic and holistic, truth of the Dharma in its very embodiment" (Krummel 2010). And this direct teaching is clearly made manifest in the *Mahāvairocana-sūtra*; as Kūkai states in his discussion of this text, in its primary sense the sūtra "is the [vast, boundless] text that exists spontaneously and permanently"; as Abé explains, "According to Kūkai, the original and complete text of the sūtra is the whole of the universe" (1999: 275). Thus Kūkai's thought may be understood to represent the very apotheosis of language in Buddhism. Language here is no longer the fundamental affliction obstructing the proper vision of the way things really are, but rather, when properly understood, it may be realized as the spontaneous manifestations of the eternal embodiment of buddhahood, which is equivalent to the originally awakened nature of all sentient beings.

In concluding this account of Buddhist perspectives emphasizing the salvific power of language, it should be noted that such perspectives often entail a critique of language as well, especially as a preparatory stage towards realization of the awakened language of buddhahood. For example, the Japanese Pure Land thinker Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263 CE) "employs general Mahāyāna concepts concerning the critique of language"; as Dennis Hirota (2006: 20–21) points out, "Shinran characterizes the self and the world as lies (or "hollow words," *soragoto*) and gibberish or delusions (*tawagoto*)"; however, Shinran also believes that there is one important exception to the "hollow words" of conventional language: for Shinran "the *nembutsu* 念仏 [the name of the Buddha Amida/Amitābha] alone is true and real (*makoto*)." According to Shinran, the name of the Buddha is not simply a means to the attainment of buddhahood, but rather is reality itself; in Shinran's words, the name "is the treasure ocean of virtues that is suchness or true reality" (translated in Hirota 2006: 33). As Hirota (2006: 51–52) explains, the path to buddhahood presented by Shinran centers "on engagement with language, in which word is one with reality, and thought and spoken word are nondual." Thus the critique of conventional language may serve as a propaedeutic for the realization of the salvific power and reality of the true language of buddhahood.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE OF LANGUAGE

While it has been noted that each of the two Buddhist perspectives presented above may entail the other to some degree, this should not occlude the significant differences between approaches that emphasize the critique of language and those that emphasize its salvific power. To bring these differences here into clearer relief, the remainder of this essay will focus on just two specific accounts: the Yogācāra presentation will be taken as paradigmatic

of the Buddhist critique of language, and Kūkai's discussion will be taken as the example of Buddhist perspectives emphasizing its salvific power; these two accounts are useful for comparative purposes since each may be understood to stand at quite opposite ends of the spectrum of Buddhist approaches to language. The differences between them might be highlighted by viewing each in terms of its respective starting points and end points. While a Buddhist critique of language may begin with an acceptance of the salvific utility of conventional language, the end point for Yogācāra is to move beyond conceptual-linguistic thought, realizing its imagined nature, and attain the nonconceptual awareness (*nirvikalpa-jñāna*) of buddhahood. And while a Buddhist perspective emphasizing language's salvific power may begin with a critique of conventional conceptual-linguistic thought, the end point according to Kūkai is to see the unity of language and reality, realizing the eternal truth that is the preaching of the very embodiment of the Dharma (*hosshin seppō*) and coming to know that all beings already are endowed with the originally awakened nature of buddhahood. Thus the beginning and end points of these two perspectives may be seen to differ considerably – even to be opposed to one another – insofar as the Yogācāra approach views engagement with conceptual-linguistic thought as the fundamental affliction to be overcome, and Kūkai's thought represents the very apotheosis of language. So in some sense his views on its salvific power may be interpreted as a complete reversal of the Yogācāra critique: rather than all language being viewed as intrinsically problematic, he understands it as fundamentally salvific, as a manifestation of buddhahood; rather than all language being viewed as misleading and false, all language is seen as inherently true.

Nevertheless, the question arises whether these two seemingly contradictory perspectives might at some level actually reduce to the same thing, at least insofar as neither allows for distinctions to be made among any set of statements or propositions at the level of ultimate reality: all linguistic expressions ultimately have the same value, whether that value is declared to be "unreal" or "real," "false" or "true." In some sense both might be seen to follow from the strong apophatic orientation in Buddhism – from the tendency to view ultimate reality as beyond characterization or as something that can only be characterized in negative terms, through declaring what it is not.

One way to consider these varying Buddhist perspectives on language is in terms of Rappaport's account of "levels of meaning" in religious discourse. Rappaport (1999: 70) argues that three distinct levels of meaning must be identified: a low-order, a middle-order, and a high-order meaning. He explains the low order of meaning as the "simple, everyday semantic sense" of terms, which is grounded in distinctions (wherein object x is distinguished from object y, etc.), which encompasses "what is meant by information in Information Theory," and which operates with taxonomies as typical organizing structures. Middle-order meaning, however, is concerned with "*meaningfulness*," that is, "not only with rationally drawn distinctions but with emotionally charged values as well"; in the domain of middle-order meaning, the concern is not with drawing fine-grained distinctions, but rather with "discovering similarities among apparently disparate phenomena" (Rappaport 1999: 70); and whereas taxonomy is the paradigm of low-order meaning, metaphor is the paradigm of middle-order meaning. Finally, Rappaport (1999: 71) explains high-order meaning as "grounded in identity and unity," an identity that is sought experientially rather than intellectually, and which "may be experienced through art, or in acts of love, but is, perhaps, most often felt in ritual and other religious devotions." He states: "Those who have known it in its more intense forms … report that, although it is beyond the reach of language, it seems enormously or even ultimately meaningful even though, or perhaps because, its

meaning is ineffable." Thus high-order meaning refers to the highest level of realization presented by religion.

While the primary function of language seems to be to carry out the operations of low-order meaning – the level that conveys the clearest advantage to the species in evolutionary terms – the other two levels are also potentialities of language that may be activated, because of its capacity to express possibilities, hypothetical realities, counterfactuals, etc. In Buddhist terms, low-order meaning may be understood as the functioning of the conventional conceptual-linguistic discourse of everyday reality, a function that is not denied or negated by Buddhism. The level of middle-order meaning may be understood in Buddhist terms to be exemplified by teachings that point the way to attainment of the ultimate goal. For Buddhist perspectives that hold to the critique of language, this would be the domain of language used as a skillful means for the realization of the inherent limitations and impediments of language; and for Buddhist perspectives emphasizing the salvific power of language, this would be the domain of doctrines that indicate the way to the true and ultimate teaching, but do not yet directly manifest that ultimate teaching. In a sense, it might be said that both perspectives would affirm the domain of middle-order meaning as a propaedeutic for the realization of the ultimate goal. The level of high-order meaning, then, might *prima facie* seem to be the stage at which the two approaches would most significantly diverge, insofar as perspectives emphasizing the critique of language might entail that all views must be abandoned, while those emphasizing its salvific power might imply that the true language of buddhahood must be affirmed. However, in another sense this may also be the level at which the two perspectives diverge the least: on Rappaport's account at least, both aim towards an experience of unity. In the end, perhaps as one approaches the nonduality of the ineffable ultimate, there is no difference between moving beyond conceptual-linguistic thought and affirming all language as an expression of buddhahood.

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THE PURE LAND IN THE HISTORY OF CHINESE BUDDHISM

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Charles B. Jones

INTRODUCTION

Throughout China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and sites where diaspora Chinese live, one may encounter Buddhist clerics and laypeople who wear a rosary (念珠 *niànzhū*) as one sign of their Buddhist identity. While such strings of beads have other religious uses, they are mainly associated with the practice of *niànfó* 念佛, or "buddha-recitation/contemplation," a practice wherein, at the most elementary level, the devotee recites the name of the buddha Amitābha (*Āmítuófó* 阿彌陀佛) in the hope of gaining rebirth in the Western Pure Land (*xīfāng jìngtǔ* 西方淨土) after death. For those who doubt that they can achieve complete liberation and buddhahood in the present life (and this includes almost all Buddhists), this practice is the expression of a hope that, while dwelling in this buddha's land and receiving his direct instruction, they can achieve these goals and escape all future suffering.

Westerners who know something about Buddhism have difficulty understanding this practice (Fujita 1996: 3). In universities and Western-oriented practice centers, they learn that Buddhism is a religion of self-reliance. One studies the doctrines and engages in the practices, and by one's own efforts purifies one's mind and realizes the truth leading to liberation. Upon hearing of "Pure Land Buddhism," usually in the Japanese formulation that emphasizes the helplessness of human beings in the present age of defilement and counsels complete reliance on the "other-power" (他力 *tālì*; Jpn. *tariki*) of the buddha Amitābha, they frequently ask how such a teaching could arise and still be considered Buddhist at all? The present chapter seeks to address this question by examining the development of Pure Land thought in China. While we will focus on doctrinal thinking about the Pure Land itself, we will perforce consider many other issues surrounding this question: What is the Pure Land? How many and what kinds are there? Can someone who is impure enter and abide in it without defiling it? If so, how?

INDIAN ROOTS

The term "Pure Land" does not appear in Indian Buddhist literature; it is a later Chinese creation (Fujita 1996: 20). Nevertheless, insofar as Indian Buddhists conceived of any buddha as localized in space, he obviously had to be *somewhere*, and so some thinkers

considered the question of where a buddha might dwell. The Pāli textual tradition represented the historical Buddha Śākyamuni as dwelling in the same world as all other beings and experiencing it largely as they did. The only difference seemed to be that the way he perceived it was emotionally dispassionate and philosophically correct. For example, while dying, he saw that he was suffering in a world that tended to produce suffering, but without resentment and while acknowledging that such things happen in the ordinary workings of cause and effect. However, he did *not* claim that the present impure world masks an inherent purity, nor did he claim to dwell in another realm characterized by purity.

Nevertheless, even in the Pāli texts one detects hints of the idea that a buddha requires an environment that reflects his own religious achievements and purity. For example, as Alan Cole points out, one of Śākyamuni's disciples objected to his dying in Kusinārā, a "miserable little town of wattle-and-daub" (Cole forthcoming; Walshe 1987: 279). Śākyamuni answered that the town was indeed suitable, because in the past it was a magnificent royal city called Kusāvatī, and he describes its former glory thus:

> And it was twelve *yojanas* long from east to west, and seven *yojanas* wide from north to south. Kusāvatī was rich, prosperous, and well-populated, crowded with people and well-stocked with food… . And the city of Kusāvatī was never free of ten sounds by day or night: the sound of elephants, horses, carriages, kettle-drums, side-drums, lutes, singing, cymbals and gongs, with cries of "Eat, drink, and be merry" as tenth… . The royal city of Kusāvatī was surrounded by seven encircling walls. One was of gold, one silver, one beryl, one crystal, one ruby, one emerald, and one of all sorts of gems.
>
> (Walshe 1987: 279–80)

The text continues with a description of this city in terms very similar to later descriptions of the Pure Land of Amitābha. Even though this treatise acknowledges that Śākyamuni does not presently abide in such a magnificent environment, it still asks the reader to see the buddha imaginatively as a great "wheel-turning king" dwelling in a rich and symmetrical city adorned with all the pleasures of the senses.

This conception of a buddha's dwelling changed with the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Mahāyāna authors and commentators vastly expanded the cosmology of Buddhism, making room for multiple world-systems floating in a vast universe. Buddhas no longer enter into an indescribable state outside the world of ordinary beings at the end of their lives, but can remain in the world exercising compassionate aid and guidance for suffering beings for such unimaginably long periods of time that they were effectively immortal. Finally, the idea took hold that, while some buddhas such as Śākyamuni might work within the present impure world (Sāha), others preside over their own "buddha-lands" or "buddha-fields" (*buddha-kṣetra*), magnificent realms whose splendor and purity match the resident buddha's purity and virtue. Many accounts of these buddhas and their lands appeared in Indian Mahāyāna texts that were subsequently translated in China and became part of the textual deposit of Pure Land Buddhism there.

Of these, the three most important for later developments were the so-called "Three Pure Land Sūtras" (*jìngtǔ sān bù* 淨土三部). These are, in their most widely accepted translations:

1 The *Larger Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtra* (*Fó shuō wúliàngshòu jīng* 佛說無量壽經), sometimes known in Chinese by the shorter name The *Large Sūtra* (*Dà jīng* 大經, Taishō 360). Tradition usually credits the obscure monk Kāng Sēngkǎi 康僧鎧 (or

Saṃghavarman) as the translator in 262, although today scholars think it underwent several subsequent revisions.[1]

2   The *Smaller Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sūtra* (*Fó shuō Āmítuó jīng* 佛說阿彌陀經), popularly known as the *Small Sūtra* (*Xiǎo jīng* 小經, Taishō 366). It was translated in 402 by the great Central Asian monk-translator Kumārajīva (334–423). Because of its brevity, it is one of the texts recited daily by Chinese monks and nuns in their morning devotions.[2]

3   The *Sūtra on the Contemplation of Amitāyus* (*Fó shuō guān wúliàngshòu fó jīng* 佛說觀無量壽佛經, Taishō 365) or *Contemplation Sūtra* (*Guān jīng* 觀經) for short. While this text purports to have been translated from a Sanskrit original by the Central Asian monk Kālayaśas (fl. early fifth century) between 424 and 442, no such original has come to light and thus we must consider reconstructions of a Sanskrit title speculative.[3]

While the first two of these texts are closely related and share a common world-view, the third is very different in purpose and outlook. In addition to these three, several other Indian texts in Chinese translation gained wide acceptance and helped shape the outlook of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism. Among these are:

1   The *Pratyutpanna Samādhi Sūtra* (Ch. *Bānzhōu sānmèi jīng* 般舟三昧經, Taishō 418). This is a very early text, having been translated in 179 CE by the Indo-Scythian monk Lokakṣema (b. 147). This is likely one of the earliest Indian Pure Land texts, and it provided a resource for many Chinese Pure Land thinkers.[4]

2   The *Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti* (Skt. *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*; Ch. *Wéimójí suǒshuō jīng* 維摩詰所說經, Taishō 475) is mainly a scripture of the "perfection of wisdom" category, but its first chapter is entitled "Buddha Lands" and contains a discourse on the nature of the Pure Land that became very famous and was widely quoted in later Chinese debates about the Pure Land. English translations exist of both the Chinese and Tibetan versions.

3   The *Great Discourse on the Perfection of Wisdom* (*Dà zhìdù lùn* 大智度論, Taishō 1509), translated in 405 by Kumārajīva, is a version of a Perfection of Wisdom sūtra with commentary by Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250). Section (*juǎn* 卷) number 92 of this massive and wide-ranging work is entitled "Chapter On Purifying a Buddha-Land" (*jìng fó guótǔ pǐn* 淨佛國土品); it answers many questions about the nature of the Pure Land and the means for attaining rebirth there.

4   The *Commentary on the Ten Grounds* (Skt: *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣā*; Ch.: *Shí zhù pípóshā lùn* 十住毘婆沙論, Taishō 1521), also by Nāgārjuna, deals with the stages of bodhisattva practice. Its ninth chapter is called the "Chapter on Easy Practice"; it contains an early exposition of Amitābha and his Pure Land. Its assertion that reliance on his power constitutes an "easy path" was quoted often in later Chinese Pure Land literature.

5   The *Verses of Aspiration: an Upadeśa on the Amitāyus Sūtra* (*Wúliàng shòu jīng yōubōtíshè* 無量壽經優波提舍, Taishō 1524) is a work by the Indian monk Vasubandhu (ca. 4th century) that comments on the dedicatory verses of the *Larger Sūtra*. It describes some specific practices for attaining rebirth in the Pure Land. Translated into Chinese in 529 by Bodhiruci (6th century), the Chinese monk Tanluan's 曇鸞 (476–542) commentary on it (Taishō 1819) became highly influential. (See Inagaki 1998)

These are the most often-cited Indian texts in the development of Chinese Pure Land thought. A few others are quoted from time to time, but these are the works that added substantively to the concept of the Pure Land. What do they tell us?

The three main Pure Land scriptures give us the main story of the genesis and nature of Amitābha and his western paradise. The most detailed version of the story appears in the *Larger Sutra*, which recounts the following (T.360, 12:267a–270b, Inagaki and Stewart 2003: 9–26; Gómez 1996: 162–176). There was once a great king who went to hear the preaching of a buddha called Lokeśvararāja. The king believed and took monastic ordination under the name Dharmākara (*Fǎzàng* 法藏). As a Mahāyāna Buddhist, he made vows to seek perfect awakening and liberation to help all other sentient beings. In particular, he vowed to create the most perfect buddha-land as an ideal place of practice and to devise the means to draw beings from the ten directions there in order to speed them toward liberation:

> Once I have become a buddha, I will make my field the best of all.
> The assembly of my followers in that field will be unique and marvelous,
> And its Seat of Awakening all-surpassing.
> My land will be like nirvana, it will be incomparable.
> I will feel compassion for living beings, and I will ferry across and liberate all of them.
> Those who come from the ten directions to be reborn in my field will be glad in their hearts and pure.
> Once they arrive in my land, they will have happiness and peace.
>
> (Gómez 1996: 164, Taishō 12:267b)

In response, Lokeśvararāja showed him billions of buddha-fields, describing the good and evil of the gods and humans living in them and distinguishing the coarser fields from the subtler.[5] After having spent five eons (*kalpa*) contemplating the practices for adorning a perfect buddha-land, Dharmākara set forth forty-eight vows, each of which states that, if such-and-such a feature of his buddha-land does not become reality, he will not accept perfect awakening. (Other translations of this text have varying numbers of vows ranging from twenty-four to forty-eight, indicating that different versions of the original served as the bases for translation. However, the essential features remain the same.) I will not list all forty-eight here, but I will call attention to a few as they give an essential understanding of the Pure Land.

In the first vow, Dharmākara declares that his buddha-land will not have the three "evil paths" of hell, hungry ghosts, and animals. This leaves only the paths of gods and humans, and the fourth vow states that even these two types of beings will be indistinguishable. These vows tell us that the Pure Land is not a typical world-system encompassing all possible rebirths. In addition, this buddha-land will be accessible to all beings who aspire to be reborn there, even for "ten moments of thought" (vow 18), cultivate all virtues (vow 19) and, upon hearing his future buddha-name Amitābha, dedicate the merit of their practices to gaining rebirth (vow 20). To such beings he will personally appear at the moment of death (vow 19). Once born in his buddha-land, they will have many of the abilities and bodily features of a fully awakened buddha, such as the divine eye, the divine ear, and the ability to read others' minds (vows 6, 7, 8) and the thirty-two bodily marks of a buddha (vow 21). The requirements that beings perfect all virtues and gain such abilities and features might lead one to think that they are effectively buddhas upon arrival, but other vows make clear that the purpose of rebirth in this buddha-land is the acquisition of buddhahood. Beings

born there are promised limitless time to practice (vow 15), they will never perish and go back to a lower rebirth (vow 2), and they will assuredly achieve buddhahood (vow 11). The land itself is to be so clear and pure that it perfectly reflects all other world-systems (vow 31). All the accoutrements of the land will be so finely wrought as to be unperceivable (vow 27), and the land itself, with all its trees and buildings, will be adorned with all kinds of brilliant jewels (vow 32).

After enumerating all of Dharmākara's vows and the inconceivable time and effort he expended in fulfilling them, the *Larger Sūtra* reveals that he succeeded and became the buddha Amitābha, and since all his vows stated that he would not accept perfect buddhahood unless the conditions of his vows were fulfilled, the clear implication is that he realized all of them and created a buddha-field exactly as described (Gómez 1996: 175–176; T.12:270a). The *Sūtra* then describes the features of this "Land of Peace and Bliss" extensively. While much of the imagery focuses on the magnificence and comfort of the land (as shown by its multicolored jeweled trees and constant temperate climate), equal attention is given to features that help its inhabitants to achieve buddhahood themselves. The wind in the trees produces the sound of the teachings; in fact, all the sounds in the air will bring to mind Buddhist teachings (Gómez 1996: 180, 182; T.12:271a–b).

But who are the inhabitants who share the Pure Land with the buddha? Here the picture becomes less clear, because in some passages the scriptures seem to say that only the most highly accomplished bodhisattvas achieve rebirth there, while other passages open the door wide for all to come, from the greatest to the worst. For example, the vows contained in the *Larger Sūtra* describe those who will achieve rebirth in Sukhāvatī as manifesting the thirty-two bodily marks of a buddha (vow 21), traveling to all worlds to gather offerings for the buddha (vow 22), preaching perfect wisdom (vow 25), having limitless inspired speech (vow 29), and so on. In a later section, the *Larger Sūtra* says that, if they practice giving and compassion, those born in the Pure Land will manifest magnificence immeasurably greater than that of the highest gods (Gómez 1996: 184–85; T.12: 272a). Passages such as these emphasize the efforts that practitioners must have made cultivating their virtue and laying down "roots of merit" in order to gain rebirth in the Pure Land and the high status and splendor they will enjoy there as a result.

However, other passages in both the *Larger Sūtra* and the *Contemplation Sūtra* indicate that beings of lower levels of achievement – or even possessing no good qualities at all – achieve rebirth with far less exertion. Both scriptures correlate various levels of prior practice and accomplishment with different levels of rebirth. The *Larger Sūtra* states that any being who hears Amitābha's name and vows to be reborn in Sukhāvatī gains rebirth immediately and is thereby guaranteed to gain final buddhahood without backsliding (technically, to achieve the state of nonretrogression, or *bùtuìzhuǎn* 不退轉) (Gómez 1996: 186–87, T.12: 272b). Only those who have committed the five most heinous sins fail to gain rebirth. The *Larger Sūtra* then describes three kinds of Buddhists. The highest are monks or nuns who practice all possible good deeds and think single-mindedly of Amitābha. The middle group consists of laypersons who engage in devotional and ritual practices and desire to be reborn in his presence. The lowest group is comprised of people who, as it were, wish they could practice virtue and are gladdened by Buddhist preaching, but can only desire to gain rebirth. The buddha meets each of them at the moment of death, though in a different manifestation for each, and their status in the Pure Land varies.

The *Contemplation Sūtra* also sorts devotees into different levels of accomplishment and rebirth. However, it presents a scheme of nine kinds covering a broader moral range of

believers from the best to the worst possible. The scripture organizes these into three levels (*pǐn* 品), each of which is divided into three grades (*sheng* 生). Those who attain rebirth at the highest grade of the highest level represent the ideal Buddhist practitioner: they possess strong faith, demonstrate strong resolve in making and keeping vows, recite advanced scriptures, and so on. Upon their death, Amitābha comes to meet them personally, accompanied by the two great bodhisattvas Avalokiteśvara and Mahāsthāmaprāpta and a great retinue. They are reborn in the buddha's immediate presence and receive direct teaching while seated on an adamantine throne, and they achieve buddhahood almost instantly (Inagaki and Stewart: 2003: 92–93; T.12: 344c).

At the other extreme are those born at the lowest level of the lowest grade, and they represent the most heinous offenders in the Buddhist moral imagination. While the *Larger Sūtra* disqualifies those who have committed the five heinous sins, the *Contemplation Sūtra* does not. As they experience the terrors of hell on their deathbeds, a "good friend" may come to them and tell them about the Pure Land and Amitābha's vows. If they but recite "Hail to the Buddha Amitābha" ten times, they will escape hell and go to rebirth in the Pure Land. However, no great retinue comes to escort them, and they are reborn on the outskirts of the Pure Land enclosed in a lotus bud. After twelve eons, the bud opens, and they receive instruction from bodhisattvas, not the buddha, and gradually perfect their practice and attain buddhahood (Inagaki and Stewart 2003: 98–99; T.12: 346a). This teaching, that even the most reprehensible person imaginable might avoid hell and attain the Pure Land simply by invoking the buddha's name, had decisive importance in the formation of Pure Land practice in China.

As should be evident, these various texts on the conditions leading to rebirth present a seemingly intractable ambiguity. On the one hand, it would appear that rebirth requires a prior store of "roots of merit" gained by moral exertion and spiritual attainment, leaving the impression that only bodhisattvas of the highest merit populate the Pure Land. On the other hand, the texts make great claims for the much simpler practice of invoking Amitābha's name. Many of the buddha's own vows as recorded in the *Larger Sūtra* describe the gifts that come to a devotee who only hears his name (see vows 34–37, 41, 43, 44, and 48), and the *Contemplation Sūtra* asserts that a mere ten repetitions of the name will extinguish the karma of even the most evil actions.

This ambiguity was permanently enshrined in Chinese teaching by a linguistic coincidence. To understand this, we must first note that one of the most prominent of the practices for gaining rebirth in the Pure Land was that of visualizing Amitābha. Most of the text of the *Contemplation Sūtra* deals with this practice, and Julian Pas (1995: 42–43) calls attention to other Buddhist scriptures whose principal teaching is the art of contemplating one or another buddha. Even the *Larger Sūtra*'s emphasis on hearing the buddha's name and rejoicing in it appears aimed at an internal practice (Pas 1995: 25) that the later Chinese tradition called "holding the name" (*chí míng* 持名). Literary Chinese had a word that could mean both "to think about" and "to recite"; this word is *niàn* 念. Thus, while Chinese Pure Land vocabulary did include ways of naming practices that distinguished between contemplation (e.g., *guan* 觀 or *chí míng*) and external recitation (e.g., *chéng míng* 稱名, "to praise the name"), the term that came to predominate was *niànfó* 念佛, which could be taken to mean either.

All of these practices entailed thinking of the Pure Land as "over there," a celestial realm far to the west that contrasted with the impure Sahā world. There was another way of regarding the Pure Land, however, and that was to see it as coextensive with the present

world. In this view, the Sahā realm is inherently pure; the perception that it is impure and not conducive to practice and attainment arises only because the impure minds of unawakened beings project impurity onto it. As the *Contemplation Sūtra* famously put it, "This mind produces the buddha; this mind is the buddha," indicating that purification of the mind by visualization makes one a buddha (Inagaki and Stewart: 2003: 8; T.12: 343a). The most frequently cited texts in support of this version of the Pure Land were the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* and the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* (*Liù zǔ dàshī fǎbǎo tán jīng* 六祖大師法寶壇經, T.2008, hereafter *Platform Sūtra*).

Of these two, the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* develops this theme more extensively. In the first chapter, called "On Buddha Lands," a young seeker asks Śākyamuni how one purifies one's future buddha-land. The Buddha replies that this comes about through purification of the mind by means of good deeds and practice. When a bodhisattva learns a point of doctrine or perfects a virtue, then that virtue accrues to his buddha-field as well as to him personally, and beings who share that quality will be drawn to his Pure Land. This part of the exposition ends with the oft-quoted summary, "Therefore … if the bodhisattva wishes to acquire a pure land, he must purify his mind. When the mind is pure, the Buddha-land will be pure" (Watson 1997: 29; T.14: 538c).

This causes the Buddha's disciple Śāriputra to wonder whether or not his master is indeed fully awakened. After all, the Buddha dwells in the present world, which clearly is not a pure land but a world of suffering and ignorance. The Buddha reads Śāriputra's thoughts and addresses this concern by teaching that the present world's impurity must not be ascribed to the Buddha whose buddha-field it is, but to the impure minds of unawakened beings. To demonstrate the point, the Buddha touches the earth with his toe and empowers all in attendance to see this very world as he sees it with his purified mind. The world suddenly manifests jeweled radiance, and the Buddha explains to Śāriputra,

> My Buddha land has always been pure like this. But because I wish to save those persons who are lowly and inferior, I make it seem an impure land full of defilements, that is all… . If a person's mind is pure, then he will see the wonderful blessings that adorn this land.
>
> (Watson 1997: 30–31; T.14: 539c)

The Buddha withdraws his toe, and everything returns to its previous state.

The *Platform Sūtra*, while not an Indian text, was still widely quoted in later Chinese debates about the Pure Land on this point, so we will consider it here. In chapter 3, a government official asks the Chan patriarch Huineng 慧/惠能 (638–713) why he sees people chanting the name of Amitābha in order to gain rebirth in the western Pure Land. Huineng replies that it is because people take the Buddha's symbolic speech literally, believing, for instance, that he meant to say that the Pure Land is 8,000 or 10,000 *li* away, when in fact these terms refer to the "ten evils and eight heterodoxies" (McRae 2000: 51; T.48: 352a). Deluded people recite the buddha's name in hopes of rebirth in a land far to the west, while superior beings who have realized their self-natures as ultimately empty know to seek the Pure Land by purifying their minds (McRae 2000: 52; T.48: 352a).

Thus, the Chinese Pure Land tradition inherited two distinct ways of conceptualizing the Pure Land. The first position came to be known as either "western-direction Pure Land" (*xīfāng jìngtǔ* 西方淨土) or "other-direction Pure Land" (*tāfāng jìngtǔ* 他方淨土); it entailed the belief that Sukhāvatī literally exists far to the west of this Sahā world, and that

one can attain rebirth there after death by religious practices such as visualization of the buddha or the simpler means of reciting his name with faith. The second position came to be known as "mind-only Pure Land" (*wéixīn jìngtǔ* 唯心淨土); it was favored by devotees connected to the Chan (Zen) School. This position holds that the world is inherently pure and that impurity results from an unawakened mind that mistakenly projects its own impurity onto the landscape. In this conception, one gains the Pure Land by exerting oneself and achieving awakening. These competing ideas provided the basis for a long series of polemical writings right up to the twentieth century.

On the topic of polemics, we may conclude this survey of the Indian sources by noting that, even before reaching China, early Pure Land ideas provoked opposition among more traditional Buddhists who felt that practitioners ought to be self-sufficient and achieve awakening through their own efforts. Some of the literature that entered the Chinese Pure Land tradition sought to explain how asking for Amitābha's help does not violate basic Buddhist principles.

For example, a long section of the *Great Discourse on the Perfection of Wisdom* describes the buddha-land in the same, very sensuous, terms as the sūtras just examined. It also indicates that the quality of gifts offered to the buddha will help to "adorn" the devotee's future buddha-land in ways that reflect these gifts' qualities. When offering the seven types of precious gem, one states, "May the karma of this offering cause my land to be adorned with the seven gems" (T.25: 710b16–17). The same is true of offering music, incense, food, and even wives and concubines (T.25: 710c2–5, 710c17–18, 710c26–27, 711a06). A questioner then asks why a buddha should want any of this, since some of it is forbidden to monks in the monastic code (*vinaya*), while other parts of it simply seem superfluous (e.g., why does a buddha require entertainment?) (T.25: 710c2–5). Also, the Buddha always taught that the five desires are like fire, like a pit, like a disease, like a prison, etc., so why would one wish that sentient beings could enjoy them in their future buddha-land? (T.25: 711a8–10). Furthermore, why would a compassionate buddha exclude the "three evil paths" (of animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-beings) from his buddha-land? Finally, why should the song of the birds preach the Dharma when a buddha is at hand willing to preach in person?

The text answers that the five desires may indeed be poisonous to ordinary beings, but they are purified when offered to all sentient beings. In the present world the five desires are the cause of suffering, strife, and violence, but at the level of gods (*deva*) and above, they are not so. In a place where the objects of the five desires are in plentiful supply and no one has to compete for them, there is no occasion for committing the ten nonvirtuous deeds, so it is all right (T.25: 711a13ff). Thus, such things as music, incense, and jewels make one's future buddha-land more pleasant. As to the absence of the three evil paths, the commentator reminds the questioner that buddhas operate in all realms, including "mixed realms" (*zá guótǔ* 雜國土) where the pure and the impure abide together.

The last point raises some serious issues that will recur in Chinese Pure Land literature. The text goes beyond the quibble about birds preaching in the place of the buddha and wonders why, of all the buddhas who preach diligently all through the cosmos, Amitābha is given pride of place, and why beings gain rebirth in his land simply by reciting his name when all the other buddhas preach repentance and arduous spiritual practice (T25: 712a17–18). As to the trees and birds, the text replies that if a buddha appears as a buddha in all places, his appearance will be too commonplace and will not engender belief. However, when the Dharma is preached by the breezes and birds, this attracts attention, and the factor of surprise arouses faith (T25: 712a20–28). Finally, the reason that Amitābha occupies a central place is that he

is a "dharma-nature body buddha" (*fǎxìng shēn fó* 法性身佛). He emits innumerable buddhas from every hair-pore, and while unawakened beings might see them as superior and inferior, in fact they are not different. If one believes this, then one has deep roots of faith, and one will certainly become a buddha (T.25: 712b6–22).

CHINESE DEVELOPMENTS

We cannot know for certain when Pure Land Buddhism arose in China, for we cannot identify the first time a Chinese Buddhist vowed to be reborn in Amitābha's Land of Bliss after death and took up the practices necessary to assure success. We do know that it took shape slowly as the various elements of the Indian tradition we have outlined above developed after Buddhism's introduction into China, and these required time for translation, absorption, and adaptation until a Pure Land movement appeared in the sixth century. Mochizuki Shinkō (1978: 5) points to the translation of the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi sūtra* in 179 as the beginning point, and we agree that this is the first textual evidence of proto-Pure Land thought. Possibly the earliest account of Pure Land practice is that of the monk Què Gōngzé 闕公則, who died during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Western Jin dynasty (r. 265–290). The text records simply that during a memorial service for him, while scriptures were being recited, he appeared to the assembly and announced that he had "been born in the western land of Ease and Bliss" and had returned with a retinue of bodhisattvas to hear the scriptures. (T.53: 616b. the text dates from 668 CE; see Ono 1932–36: 10:5b).

The monk Huiyuan of Mount Lu 盧山慧遠 (334–416), widely considered the first "patriarch" (*zǔ* 祖) of the Pure Land school in China,[6] ranks among the earliest recorded Chinese figures to promote the practice of *nianfo* in order to secure rebirth in Sukhāvatī. We find the evidence of his Pure Land activity in two brief texts. The first describes how, in the year 402 and at the request of a lay follower, he convened an assembly of 123 laymen to recite Amitābha's name and vow to attain rebirth in the Pure Land. The same lay follower composed the texts for the ritual (T.50: 357–361; English translation in Zürcher 1959: 240–53). The second story concerns one of Huiyuan's monastic disciples, Sēngjì 僧濟 (d.u.). When this monk fell critically ill while visiting his master, Huiyuan facilitated a vigil to enable his disciple to gain rebirth in the Pure Land (T.50: 362b). There is a third text containing an exchange of correspondence between Huiyuan and the famous Kuchean monk-translator Kumārajīva based on a reading of the instructions for visualizing the buddha in the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi sūtra*, but aside from the fact that it mentions Amitābha, it is not a strictly Pure Land topic, but one focused on a general form of meditation (T.45: 134b–135a; for a critical study of all three of these passages with complete English translations, see Jones 2008).

Looking specifically to the manner in which the Pure Land was conceived, we may note three separate trends. The first two, which coexisted throughout most of the history of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism and sometimes directly competed with each other, are the concepts of "mind-only Pure Land" and "western-direction Pure Land" or "other-direction Pure Land" introduced in the previous section. The third way of presenting the Pure Land appeared early in the twentieth century and reflects the growing social concerns of Buddhism; it is called "the Pure Land in the human realm" (*rénjiān jìngtǔ* 人間淨土).

The competing doctrines of "mind-only Pure Land" and "western-direction Pure Land" reflect the conflict between the need for Pure Land eschatology to remain consistent with Buddhist philosophy on the one hand, and the need to envision the Pure Land as a suitable

object of devotion on the other. As the needs of philosophers and devotees differ, the conceptions of the Pure Land required by each were difficult to harmonize. The devotee wishing to engage in visualization of the Buddha Amitābha and his Pure Land requires rich imagery and the hope that even the unawakened could achieve rebirth. The philosopher needs to know that the doctrine of the Pure Land does not violate widely accepted Buddhist concepts such as nonduality, emptiness, and the mentally constructed nature of all reality, buddha-lands included.

Consequently, texts and teachers whose aim was to arouse faith and inspire devotional practice tended to dwell on the magnificence of the Pure Land and its availability even to the vilest sinner. As an example, we may look at Tánluán 曇鸞 (476–542) and his *Commentary on [Vasubandhu's] Treatise on Rebirth* (*Wúliàngshòu jīng yōupótíshè yuànshēng jié zhù* 無量壽經優婆提舍願生偈註, T.1819; a full English translation of this work is available in Inagaki 1998). The greater part of the treatise is taken up with contemplations of the seventeen "glorious merits" (*miàosè gōngdé* 妙色功德) of the Pure Land. These merits include the purity of the Pure Land, its vastness, its basis in the Buddha's compassion, its luminous appearance, its adornment with precious jewels, its blazing illumination, and so on (Inagaki 1998: 136ff.). The last of the seventeen merits is that "whatever aspirations sentient beings may have, they will all be fulfilled" (Inagaki 1998: 168–169). The section concludes with the lines, "For this reason, I aspire to be born in [Amitābha] Buddha's land." The phrase "for this reason" makes clear that the text's purpose in describing all the glorious merits of the Pure Land is to arouse faith and motivate practice.

Other such exemplary texts could be cited, but it should be clear that the devotional and aspirational conception of the Pure Land requires at least two things: that it be separate and distant from the present defiled world and that descriptions of it include a wealth of magnificent features so as to arouse a desire to be born in it. Those religious leaders who attracted and ministered to congregations of devotees resisted attempts to minimize, denigrate, or psychologize these aspects of the Pure Land, insisting that it was a real place separated from the present world and vastly preferable to it. As recently as the late nineteenth century, the thirteenth patriarch of Pure Land, Yìnguāng 印光 (1861–1947), instructed his followers to accept this sort of detailed, literal interpretation of the Pure Land:

> Have deep faith in the Buddha's words, penetrate [them] without doubt or delusion; only this can be called true faith… . [I] teach that if [one takes] the various and inconceivable supreme splendors of the Pure Land as fables, metaphors, or psychological states, then this is not true perception. If one maintains this kind of heretical knowledge and ludicrous view, then one loses the actual benefit of rebirth in the Pure Land.
>
> (Yinguang 1991: 4:1939)

Such insistence that the Pure Land lays off to the west is the reason that this view acquired the name "western-direction Pure Land" or "other-direction Pure Land."

There were other thinkers who believed that the "western-direction" position violates several fundamentals of Buddhist thought. By distinguishing this world from the Pure Land, purity from impurity, unawakened beings from buddhas, and so on, it denies the basic Mahāyāna view of the nonduality of all things and all views. By asserting that the Pure Land exists external to the mind and can be pure even to an impure mind, it is incompatible with the view that beings live in a world constructed by their minds; "the triple world is mind-only" is a shibboleth repeated again and again in Chinese Buddhist literature.

The *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra* and the *Contemplation Sūtra* provided the primary scriptural supports for the "mind-only Pure Land" position. We saw in the previous section how the former presented the story of the Buddha temporarily manifesting the purity of the present world as perceived by a pure Buddha-mind and the latter's declaration that the land is pure in proportion to the purity of the mind. As noted earlier, *The Platform Sūtra also* derogated the naïve realism of the "western-direction" position in passages such as this:

> The deluded person recites the Buddha's [name] and seeks for rebirth in that other [location], while the enlightened person purifies his mind. Thus the Buddha said, "as the mind is purified, so is the Buddha land purified."
>
> (T.48: 352a; McRae: 2000: 52)

The debate between those who held the "western-direction" position and those (mostly associated with the Chan school) who held to the "mind-only" position lasted well into the twentieth century.

However, some thinkers sought for ways to reconcile the two positions. One strategy was to declare that the presentation of Sukhāvatī as a paradise literally off to the west is an expedient device (*fāngbiàn* 方便; Skt. *upāya*) that the Buddha deployed to entice devotees of lesser capacities to seek rebirth there. For example, Yúnqī Zhuhong 雲棲袾宏 (1535–1615) divides aspects of the Pure Land into the provisional (*quán* 權) and the definitive (*shí* 實). The boundaries are not firm, however: what is provisional for one being might be definitive for another, depending upon their respective levels of attainment. In truth, the buddha has no land at all, since, as a scripture says, his spirit (*shén* 神) pervades everywhere and has no need of a land. However, he deploys a realm as an expedient to lure in weak beings. Sages know better, so it does no harm to use the term "land" (Zhuhong n.d.: 33:391a).

Zhuhong, in his commentary on the *Shorter Sutra*, also relied on the distinction between principle (*lǐ* 理), a term meaning reality-as-it-is and as-it-operates, and phenomena (*shì* 事), or the world as construed by individual minds into concrete appearances. By applying these concepts to the Pure Land itself, Zhuhong argued that, like any other reality, it can be perceived correctly by an awakened mind or incorrectly by an unawakened one. Amitābha himself has arranged its phenomenal aspects to attract unawakened beings to it, but once there they hear the preaching of the buddha and gain awakening, thereupon realizing the mind-only nature of the land. At the highest level, the practitioner understands that principle and phenomena interpenetrate; one does not abandon the concrete appearances of the Pure Land (or anything else) to seek for principle elsewhere:

> The field of senses and the mind [encompass both] principle and phenomena; both fundamentally and thoroughly interpenetrate. The field of the senses is phenomena; this is called "according to characteristics." (*suíxiāng* 隨相) The mind is consciousness-only (*wéishí* 唯識). Returning to its nature (*guīxìng* 歸性) is principle. All thoroughly interpenetrate.
>
> (Zhuhong n.d.: 33:356b)

Thus, one may hold both the "western-direction" and "mind-only" positions concurrently without contradiction.

Another strategy involved setting up a typology that arranged various kinds of buddha-lands into categories in order to accommodate all needs. Both Zhuhong and Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568–1610) employed this strategy. They surveyed a wide range of Buddhist literature and identified several different kinds of pure land. Here is Yuan's presentation, in his *Comprehensive Treatise on the West* (*Xīfāng hélùn* 西方合論, T.1976), published in 1599:

1 Pure Land of Vairocana (*pílúzhēnà jìngtǔ* 毘盧遮那淨土). As the primordial Buddha, Vairocana pervades all of reality as its ground and substance, this is the formless pure land. It is the entire realm of reality (*dharmadhātu*) in which all things co-inhere: purity and defilement, buddhas and beings, all perfectly interfuse.

2 Mind-only Pure Land. This is the pure land described in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* and the *Contemplation Sūtra*, which manifests when the practitioner succeeds in purifying his or her mind.

3 Constant-truth Pure Land (*héng zhēn jìngtǔ* 恒真淨土). Referring to the *Lotus Sūtra*, this indicates the Pure Land manifested during the assembly on Vulture Peak, which included both bodhisattvas and worldlings.

4 Conjured-manifestation Pure Land (*biànxiàn jìngtǔ* 變現淨土). Occasionally, as when the Buddha altered the environment on Vulture Peak in the *Lotus Sūtra* or touched the earth with his toe in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, an impure land is caused to manifest its purity. However, this is only a temporary pure land, not one to which anyone can aspire for rebirth.

5 Send the Reward [-body] Pure Land (*jì bào jìngtǔ* 寄報淨土). This is the peak of the Form Realm, where the highest bodhisattvas manifest their reward-bodies (*saṃbhoga-kāya*). However, it is still within cyclic existence and so does not equal escaping the world altogether in Sukhāvatī.

6 Divided body Pure Land (*fēn shēn jìngtǔ* 分身淨土). Here Yuan cites two scriptures that describe Śākyamuni as dwelling simultaneously in this present Sahā land and in a pure buddha-land.

7 Pure Lands that depend on other Pure Lands (*yī tā jìngtǔ* 依他淨土). Yuan quotes to the *Brahmā Net Discourse* (*Fanwang jing* 梵網經), which portrays Vairocana as emanating billions of buddhas and buddha-lands from his own being, making them dependent on the first category given above.

8 Pure Lands of All Directions (*zhū fāng jìngtǔ* 諸方淨土). This category covers the pure lands of all the buddhas in the cosmos but asserts that, for a variety of reasons, none is as good as the pure land of Amitābha.

9 Four Types of Pure Land in One Mind (*yī xīn sì zhǒng jìngtǔ* 一心四種淨土). This is a composite category that actually encompasses five distinct types of pure land, possibly in an attempt to keep the overall number of categories to ten. These range from the Impure Land Where Sages and Worldlings Dwell Together (*huìtǔ zhī zhōng fán jū shèng jū* 穢土之中凡居聖居), which describes the situation when Śākyamuni preached in the Sahā world to unawakened beings, to the Pure Land of Eternally Quiescent Light (*cháng jì guāng* tǔ 常寂光土), in which all the beings are perfectly awakened and transcend both bodies and lands.

10 The Inconceivable Pure Land that Receives Sentient Beings of the Ten Directions (*shèshòu shífāng yīqiè yǒuqíng bùkěsīyì jìngtǔ* 攝受十方一切有情不可思議淨土). While the first type of pure land, that of Vairocana, described the cosmos as the

inconceivable body of this primal buddha, this last category refers specifically to Sukhāvatī where Amitābha dwells. While it is similarly all-pervasive and transcends all conventional knowledge, it is superior to the first in that it also takes on a particular phenomenal appearance and so allows for the presence of unawakened beings who cling to concrete perceptions. Thus it is a suitable dwelling for all beings.

(T.1976, 48: 390a–392a; Zhuhong presents a much simpler
schema of only four categories in Zhuhong n.d.: 33:390b)

While very complex, this typology serves to resolve the conflicts and contradictions inherent in thinking about the Pure Land in a number of ways. It takes into account as wide a range of Buddhist scriptures as possible, in particular naming those that were popular and influential such as the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Huayan Sūtra*, and the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*. It reconciled the devotional need for a richly imagined Pure Land with the imperative for philosophical rigor by showing the sheer variety of Pure Lands in states suited to every being's capacity, from the impure land where the Buddha preached to realms that transcend all images and limitations of time and space. Lastly, it served the needs of Pure Land followers by demonstrating the superiority of Amitābha's Land of Bliss.

Until the end of the nineteenth century, such ways of portraying the Pure Land sufficed for both common and elite devotees, but with the onset of the twentieth century, a new set of challenges called for another way of envisioning the goal. The revolutionary spirit running through China at this time rejected all previous conceptions of the Pure Land because they seemed otherworldly and irrelevant to the needs of living people. "Mind-only Pure Land" manifests only to the elite practitioner who can claim awakening, while the "western-direction Pure Land" serves only as a postmortem destination. Under the threat of cultural irrelevance and the possible confiscation of temple lands for more practical uses, Buddhist leaders rethought the Pure Land.

The pioneer in this effort was the monk-reformer Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), who declared that Buddhism is a religion that benefits human life in this world and not the next. Thus, he coined the terms "Buddhism for human life" (*rénshēng fójiào* 人生佛教) and "Buddhism in the human realm" (*rénjiān fójiào* 人間佛教, also translated as "Humanistic Buddhism"). Taixu's disciples, such as Shengyan 聖嚴 (1931–2009) and Zhengyan 證嚴 (1937–), redefined the Pure Land as "The Pure Land in the Human Realm" (*rénjiān jìngtǔ* 人間淨土). By this they mean that Buddhists, far from desiring escape from a world of incurable suffering by seeking rebirth in a distant paradise, should engage in social reform and charitable work in order to transform *this* world into the Pure Land. In this model, the Pure Land will appear when the environment is cleansed and healed, the rights of women and children are safeguarded, and economic and social justice prevails (Shengyan 1997; see also Jones 2003).

As a concept, the Pure Land has had a rich and dynamic history. It has crossed from Indian religious culture into China, which grappled with the necessity of making it serve a variety of needs in a variety of contexts. It has answered the question of where a buddha dwells; it has served as an object of contemplation for advanced mediators; it has been a practical goal for ordinary people who lacked confidence in their ability to escape suffering through arduous practices; and it has motivated a new generation of social activists. Its very flexibility made it responsive to many types of religious needs, and thus it endures to the present day.

NOTES

1   T.360, 12:265–79. Two English translations worth consulting are Gómez 1996 and Inagaki and Stewart 2003. For information on date of translation, see Gómez 1996: 126.

2   T.366, 12: 346–48. The same sources cited in the previous note also contain translations of this text. The information on translation date is from Gómez 1996: 125.

3   T.365, 12:340–346. For information on its origins, see Pas 1995: 35–36. English sources give various renderings of the short title: aside from *Contemplation Sūtra*, it is also sometimes referred to as the *Visualization Sūtra* or the *Meditation Sūtra*.

4   T.418, 13:901–20. The full title of this sūtra is the *Pratyutpanna-buddha-saṃmukhāvasthita-samādhi-sūtra*, which means roughly "the scripture on the meditation that brings one face to face with the buddhas of the present." On the dates of composition and translation, see Harrison 1998: 8.

5   The original text is ambiguous here. It might indicate that the various buddha-fields can be distinguished into the coarse (*cū* 粗) and the subtle or marvelous (*miào* 妙), which is the way Gómez (1996: 165) translates the passage. It could also mean that the buddha described the coarser and subtler aspects of each land, and Inagaki and Stewart follow this reading (Inagaki and Stewart 2003: 13).

6   Both the ideas that Pure Land is a "school" and that it has a natural line of "patriarchs" are problematic, but the scope of this chapter does not allow for discussion of the issues involved. I refer the reader to Sharf 2002 for an excellent overview of the problems.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

BUDDHA-NATURE AND THE LOGIC OF PANTHEISM

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Douglas Duckworth

INTRODUCTION

Buddha-nature (*tahāgatagarbha*) is a central topic in Mahāyāna Buddhist thought. As the pure nature of mind and reality, it conveys the nature of being and the relationship between the buddha(s) and sentient beings. Buddha-nature is that which allows for sentient beings to become buddhas. It is the living potential for awakening.

In this chapter I will look into interpretations of buddha-nature starting with the *Sublime Continuum* (*Uttaratantra*, ca. fourth century), the first commentarial treatise focused on this subject. I will then present its role(s) in Mahāyāna Buddhism in general, and in the interpretations of Yogācāra and Madhyamaka in particular. Next I will discuss the role of buddha-nature as a key element in the theory and practice of Buddhist tantra, which will lead into a discussion of this doctrine in light of *pantheism* ("all is God"). Thinking of buddha-nature in terms of pantheism can help bring to light significant dimensions of this strand of Buddhist thought.

An etymology of the term "buddha-nature" (*tathāgatagarbha*) reflects the variable status and complexity of the subject matter. The Sanskrit compound *tathā + gata*, meaning "the thus gone one" (i.e., buddha) is the same spelling as the compound *tathā + āgata*, meaning "the thus *come* one"; the term reveals the dual-quality of a transcendent buddha thus gone and an immanent buddha thus come. Also, "*garbha*" can mean "embryo," "womb," and "essence." On the one hand, as an embryonic seed it denotes a latent potentiality to be *developed* and the subsequent consummation in the attainment of buddhahood. As a womb, it connotes a comprehensive matrix or an all-embracing divine presence in the world to be *discovered*.

The relationship between the transcendent world of buddhas and the immanent world of beings is a central topic of buddha-nature discourses. There are nine analogies in the *Sublime Continuum* (I.96–97) that illustrate this relationship. The examples depict how buddha-nature exists in the world: like the buddha in a lotus, like honey in a beehive, like grain in a husk, like gold in a dirt heap, like a treasure under a pauper's house, like a sprout that grows from a small seed, like a statue wrapped in an old cloth, like a king in the womb of an ugly woman, and like gold in the earth. These nine analogies are drawn from the only sūtra dedicated specifically to buddha-nature, the *Buddha-Nature Sūtra* (Takasaki 1966: 268). It

is noteworthy that with the exception of two analogies representing buddha-nature as a latent cause, the king in the womb and the sprout, the other seven depict it as a concealed pure essence, *fully present* in the phenomenal world (King 1995: 209).

Buddha-nature, as a pure essence residing in temporarily obscured sentient beings, is a considerable diversion from the negative language found in many other Buddhist texts, and also is a language that is strikingly similar to the very positions that Buddhists often argue against. Although the term "*tathāgathagarbha*" is a new usage in Mahāyāna literature, a similar concept, the innate nature of mind (*cittaprakṛti*), is found in early Buddhist texts, such as the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* and *Aṅguttara Nikāya* in the Pali Canon (Takasaki 1966: 34). Yet the unchanging, permanent status attributed to buddha-nature is certainly a radical departure from the language emphasizing impermanence within the discourses of early Buddhism. Such language demonstrates a decisive break from the early Buddhist triad of impermanence (*anitya*), suffering (*duḥkha*), and selflessness (*anātman*). The *Sublime Continuum* even states: "The qualities of purity (*śubha*), self (*ātman*), bliss (*sukha*), and permanence (*nitya*) are the transcendent results … " (I.35).

INTERPRETATIONS OF BUDDHA-NATURE

As a positive nature of mind and reality, buddha-nature is a distinctively Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine, taking a place along with the Yogācāra doctrine of the basic consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) and the universal emptiness (*śūnyatā*) of Madhyamaka. The doctrine of emptiness holds that there is no intrinsic nature in anything, even the buddha. Stated straightforwardly, emptiness is the denial of any and all grounds. In contrast to this *groundlessness*, the doctrine of buddha-nature on the surface seems to mean just the opposite, a groundless foundation or ground of being that is the positive counterpart of emptiness. The relationship between emptiness, as the transcendent nature of all things, and buddha-nature, as the immanent nature of the buddha in the world, is complex. How are emptiness and buddha-nature reconciled in Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions?

A key passage from the *Discourse Explaining the Intent* (*Saṃdhinirmocanasūtra*, ca. fourth century), an influential scripture for interpreting Buddhist texts, presents a way to understand this relationship and reconcile conflicting messages conveyed in Buddhist sūtras. The text outlines the teaching of the Buddha in terms of three distinct "wheels of doctrine," which are divided according to the content of the discourse and the capacities of the audience (Powers 1995: 138–41). The sūtra describes the discourses of emptiness as the second wheel of doctrine and explicitly states that these are not the full disclosure of the Buddha's teaching. While the sūtra does not explicitly mention buddha-nature, this idea comes to be interpreted by later Buddhist thinkers in terms of the distinctive teaching of the third wheel of doctrine.

According to the three-wheel scheme in the *Discourse Explaining the Intent*, the first wheel of doctrine conveys the teachings of "the four noble truths." The emphasis of the teachings here is the nature of existence as suffering, impermanence, and no-self (*anātman*). The content of the second wheel of doctrine, which the sūtra calls "signlessness," is characterized by emptiness, the principle that all phenomena lack any intrinsic existence. The discourses of the second wheel convey that every phenomenon is empty; even wisdom, nirvana, and the principal teaching of the first wheel (the four noble truths) are denied the status of having any ultimate existence or intrinsic nature.

In the third wheel we get a different characterization of the ultimate truth. The *Discourse Explaining the Intent* says that the third wheel contains "the excellent differentiation [of the ultimate]." Rather than simply depicting the ultimate truth *via negativa*, the third wheel reveals the ultimate as an immanent reality; it depicts the pure mind as constitutive of the ultimate. In addition to the Yogācāra doctrines laid out in the *Discourse Explaining the Intent*, the third wheel of doctrine also comes to be identified with teachings of the presence of buddha-nature. Significantly, the relationship between emptiness in the second wheel and the presence of buddha-nature in the third wheel becomes a pivotal issue around which Mahāyāna traditions stake their ground.

As buddha-nature is adopted into Yogācāra and the third wheel of the three-wheel scheme of the *Discourse Explaining the Intent*, this doctrine comes to be identified with the basic consciousness, the fundamental mind. The *Descent to Lanka Sūtra* (*Laṅkāvatārasūtra*), for instance, portrays the basic consciousness as a synonym for buddha-nature (Suzuki 1968: 190–93). The *Densely Arrayed Sūtra* (*Gandavyūhasūtra*) also describes buddha-nature in terms of the basic consciousness (alternatively translated here as "universal ground"):

> The various grounds are the universal ground (*kun gzhi*; Skt. *ālaya*),
> Which is also the buddha-nature.
> The buddhas taught this [buddha-]nature
> With the term "universal ground."[1]

As the intrinsic purity of mind, buddha-nature supplements a Yogācāra theory of mind, by offering a positive alternative to the theory of a basic consciousness that otherwise functions simply as the distorted cognitive structure of suffering. In this way, buddha-nature plays the role of not only the potential for an awakened mind, but the cognitive structure of awakening, too.

In a similar way that this doctrine is integrated into Yogācāra, it is also absorbed into the Madhyamaka tradition (the other main Mahāyāna school). Yet in Madhyamaka, rather than being assimilated with the basic consciousness, buddha-nature comes to be identified with emptiness, the nature of reality. Candrakīrti (ca. 600–650), an influential figure in this tradition, cites the *Descent to Lanka Sūtra* where the text's interlocuter, Mahāmati, asks the Buddha how buddha-nature is different from the Self proclaimed by non-Buddhists, and he answers:

> Mahāmati, my buddha-nature teaching is not similar to the non-Buddhists' declaration of Self. Mahāmati, the Tathāgatas, Arhats, and completely perfect Buddhas teach buddha-nature as the meaning of the words: emptiness, the authentic limit, nirvana, non-arising, wishlessness, etc. For the sake of immature beings who are frightened by selflessness, they teach by means of buddha-nature.
>
> (Candrakīrti 1957: 196; see also Suzuki 1968: 68–69)

Here buddha-nature is said to be the meaning of emptiness, taught to those who are frightened by the teaching of no-self. This is echoed in a Tibetan commentary on the *Sublime Continuum*, where Gyeltsapjé (rGyal tshab rje, 1364–1432), a scholar in the Geluk (dGe lugs) tradition, says that what is really meant by buddha-nature is emptiness (Gyeltsapjé n.d.: 75a–78b). In this Madhyamaka interpretation, buddha-nature is taken to be a place-holder for emptiness, another way of articulating the lack of intrinsic nature of mind and reality.

Yet buddha-nature in Madhyamaka is not only interpreted as a way of expressing this lack of intrinsic nature. Buddha-nature is also taken to mean the other (positive) side of emptiness, and thus the doctrine comes to shape a Madhyamaka interpretation of emptiness in a positive light, in a way that parallels its place in a Yogācāra interpretation (as a positive foundation of mind). In Madhyamaka, buddha-nature comes to supplement the meaning of emptiness, as emptiness becomes delineated in two ways. That is, two meanings of emptiness are distinguished to account for two ways of being empty: (1) being empty of that which is extrinsic and (2) being empty of that which is intrinsic. To illustrate this distinction with a simple example, in the way that water can be empty of (i.e., lack) the quality of CI (chlorine), but not lack the quality of H_2O, something can be (extrinsically) empty of something else without being (intrinsically) empty of itself. In Tibet, these two modes of emptiness come to be known as "self-emptiness" (*rang stong*) and "other-emptiness" *(gzhan stong)*, respectively. While buddha-nature gets associated with both kinds of emptiness in Madhyamaka (and sometimes only with one and not the other), it is distinctively identified with the latter, other-emptiness, as a positive ground of being.

A key source for the distinction between these two ways of being empty is another stanza from the *Sublime Continuum*. This is frequently used to show that buddha-nature, the "basic element" (*khams*; Skt. *dhātu*), is only empty in the sense that it lacks what it is not, but it is not empty of the positive qualities that constitute what it is:

> The basic element is empty of those adventitious [phenomena] that have the character
>   of separability,
> But not empty of the unexcelled qualities that have the character of inseparability.
>
> <div align="right">(I.155)</div>

Here buddha-nature, as the ground of emptiness, is not simply a lack of intrinsic existence; it is what remains in emptiness when defilements are removed. As a positive foundation, buddha-nature supplements emptiness in Madhyamaka in a similar way as it supplements Yogācāra's basic consciousness.

A positive interpretation of buddha-nature, as the pure nature of mind and reality, has been critized by the "critical Buddhism" movement in modern Japan. This doctrine has continued to be a flashpoint in a contemporary debate and has been contested as a reified absolute and as a misguided extrapolation of Śākyamuni's intent that is not "authentically Buddhist" (see Hubbard & Swanson 1997). Robert Sharf, depicting this movement's opposition to buddha-nature, shows that the doctrine has been seen not only as a result of intellectual stagnation, but of moral decline as well:

> The dogma that ultimately all distinctions are illusory – that all beings are essentially
> equal from the perspective of their shared buddha-nature – is inherently reactionary in so
> far as it obviates the need for genuine equality, social justice, and political engagement.
>
> <div align="right">(Sharf 1999: section I)</div>

Despite these critical claims voiced from modern Japan, which reproduce medieval scholastic debates on this issue, it is precisely the *ethical* dimensions of buddha-nature that are put forward in the *Sublime Continuum*, the first commentarial treatise on this topic. There we find a verse that states that the teaching of this "basic element" is for the purpose of removing five faults:

The existence [of the basic element] is taught to relinquish these five faults: discouragement, disparagement of inferior beings, not apprehending the authentic, denigration of the authentic truth, considering ourselves superior.

(I.157)

Longchenpa (kLong chen pa, 1308–64), an important figure in the Nyingma (rNying ma) tradition (the "old school" of translations in Tibet), explains these five faults as follows:

If the essential nature of awakening is not seen to exist within oneself, then these faults will arise: (1) one may become discouraged, [thinking] "someone like myself cannot become a buddha," and not generate the mind of awakening; (2) even if [the awakened mind is] generated, one may disparage others, [thinking] "I am a bodhisattva, others are ordinary," which will hinder the attainment of the higher path; (3) through holding onto the extreme of emptiness, one will not engage in the ultimate nature of the expanse, and thus not apprehend the authentic; (4) due to falling to an extreme of eternalism or annihilationism, one will disparage the authentic doctrine; (5) by not seeing other sentient beings and oneself as equal, one will incur the faults of holding onto self and other.

(Longchenpa 1996a: 902–3).

Rather than a reactionary ideology that legitimates egoism and oppression, the doctrine of buddha-nature does just the opposite: it helps to overcome obstacles to liberation like discouragement, pride, misunderstanding the self and emptiness, and inequality. Longchenpa shows how buddha-nature serves as a remedy to these faults:

By knowing that such a basic element exists as spontaneously present in oneself and others, one will be able to accomplish great benefit for others: (1) one will be joyous, knowing that the accomplishment of liberating one's mind is without difficulty; (2) with respect for all sentient beings as buddhas – in addition to not inflicting harm or hurting them – one will benefit them; and one will be able to accomplish the benefit of others through developing: (3) supreme knowledge that realizes the ultimate expanse; (4) wisdom that sees the abiding reality; and (5) the maṇḍala of limitless love.

(Longchenpa 1996a: 904–5)

Here we see a kind of functionalist explanation of the theory of buddha-nature: it is taught for its role in overcoming obstacles on the path to awakening. Thus, the doctrine is depicted as another skilful means in the practice of Mahāyāna, instrumental to the development of such qualities as joy, respect, understanding, and love. As an integral part of the Mahāyāna tradition, the concept of buddha-nature is portrayed as a means to cultivate compassion and insight, which are the two aspects of the mind of awakening (*bodhicitta*), the method and wisdom at the heart of the Mahāyāna.

THE LOGIC OF BUDDHA-NATURE

A stanza from the *Sublime Continuum* offers three reasons to show that buddha-nature exists in beings. It reads:

Because the body of the perfect buddha is radiant,
Because thusness is indivisible,
Because of possessing heritage;
Therefore, all beings always possess the essential nature of buddha.

(I.28)

Ngok Loden Sherap (rNgog bLo ldan shes rab, 1059–1109), who translated this text from Sanskrit to Tibetan, explained the three reasons for the existence of buddha-nature respectively in terms of (1) effect, (2) nature, and (3) cause (Ngok 2006: 331). The first verse of the stanza puts forward a reason for the existence of buddha-nature through proving the cause from its *effect*, like knowing fire from smoke. That is, if a buddha is acknowledged, an unconditioned and "radiant" state that is the culminating effect of the journey of a sentient being, then the cause, the unconditioned and radiant nature, must also permeate beings.

This first reason is an argument based on the presumption of the existence of a buddha, a kind of *teleological argument* for the immanence of the divine. Of course this is not the same kind of teleological argument we find in the argument from design – inferring a designer from the presence of complexity (presumed to be the creation of God) – but I wish to draw out a family resemblence between these two kinds of analysis. Here I aim to show how arguments for buddha-nature attempt to reconcile reason with faith in a way that parallels ideas in the philosophical theology of Abrahamic traditions. There are of course significant differences between these distinctive contexts – given the fact that Buddhist traditions are not driven by concerns revolving around a creator God, and indeed reject such a notion in favor of dependent origination and emptiness. Nevertheless, by pointing out parallels here, I want to claim a place for Buddhist thought in a more global, less culturally specific way of thinking about issues in the philosophy of religion.

As for a Buddhist version of a teleological argument for buddha-nature, it can run something like this: if a future is acknowledged when beings are united with a perfect and unchanging divinity (or buddha), then that unchanging divinity must also in some way participate in the present world because any change between pre- and post-union would by definition contradict the unchanging divinity. In the way things appear, however, this may or may not be realized due to the presence of adventitious defilements that obscure this reality for a sentient being, yet the potential of being a buddha exists nevertheless.

The second verse of the stanza from the *Sublime Continuum* quoted above, 'Because thusness is indivisible,' proclaims the indivisibility of thusness (*de bzhin nyid*; Skt. *tathatā*), the nature of reality. This verse, which Ngok characterized as evoking *nature* rather than an *effect*, makes a case for the presence of the buddha in the world of beings due to there being no distinctions in thusness, the nature of reality. Since there cannot be the slightest qualitative difference in the nature of what is unconditioned, the nature of a buddha cannot be different from that of a sentient being. Here we are reminded of the distinctive Mahāyāna interpretation of the inseparability of cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*) and nirvana, which implicates the ultimate indivisibility of buddhas and sentient beings.

The reason evoking the indivisible nature in this second verse can be seen as a kind of *cosmological argument* for buddha-nature, an argument based on the presumption of metaphysical unity (as opposed to a metaphysical assumption of real, separate things with external relations). That is, it posits the idea that since "suchness" (or nature) is unchanging, there is continuity – or a common ground – between sentient beings and buddhas. While

defilements may obscure this reality for a sentient being, defilements are adventitious; they are accidental and contingent – not inherent within the nature of beings. The nature of the buddha, however, pervades all beings. Thus, in essence all beings presently participate in the changeless and timeless nature of the buddha.

The third verse, "Because of possessing heritage," states that all beings have the potential to be a buddha because it is their *heritage* (*gotra*). The buddha-nature, as the heritage of all beings, is something like a divine spark within them, or in Ngok's terms, the *cause* of a buddha. As Parkum and Stultz put it, "We all have Buddha Nature … we are born with Original Blessing, not Original Sin" (Parkum & Stultz 2003: 282).

The third verse can be seen to put forward a kind of *ontological argument* for buddha-nature, one based on the presumption that sentient beings have what it takes to be buddhas. This of course is quite different from the "ontological argument" popularized by Anselm (1033–1109), and it is based on quite different presumptions, too: namely, there is no ontological rift between God (or buddha) and world (or sentient being). That is to say, sentient beings can become buddhas because they are not ontologically distinct. Since everyone possesses it, buddha-nature presumes liberation and buddhahood for all, unlike the claim that some beings are eternally damned to suffer in cyclic existence, as in the Yogācāra doctrine of the "outcastes" (*icchantika*) who lack this heritage.

Mipam (Mi pham, 1842–1912), a late Tibetan commentator on buddha-nature thought, summarized the reasons for buddha-nature from the *Sublime Continuum* as follows:

> In this way, (1) the existence of the cause, heritage, is essentially not distinct from the Truth Body (*chos sku*; Skt. *dharmakāya*) at the time of the fruition, and (2) if the Truth Body at the time of the fruition exists, then at the time of sentient beings it also necessarily exists without increase or decrease, and (3) although there is the imputation of causality and temporality, in reality the expanse of reality is one taste within the immutable essence; the three reasons establish that all sentient beings have buddha-nature due to the authentic path of reasoning that is engaged by the power of fact.
>
> (1987b: 583–84)

In this way, he puts forward reasons "by the power of fact" to support buddha-nature. Inferential reason is not typically associated with the doctrine of buddha-nature, which tends to be taken as an immanantly practical doctrine, or treated simply as an article of faith. Indeed, the *Sublime Continuum* states that the ultimate truth is understood by faith alone: "The ultimate truth of the self-existing is understood only by faith; the blazing disk of the sun cannot be seen by the blind" (I.153). While reasoned arguments for buddha-nature may be subordinate to its practical purposes in the Buddhist tradition, the process of establishing its reality through reason, and (reflexively) understanding it, is not necessarily "bad logic," but is arguably circular by necessity. This feature of logical circularity is a feature of pantheistic strands of religion that do not presume an unbridgeable, ontological gulf between God and world or between a buddha and sentient being.[2]

The point I wish to raise here is not only that metaphysical presumptions shape an inquiry into reality (or that they are embedded within any inquiry into the nature of reality), but that the process of reasoning into reality itself becomes a phenomenological project in the end. That is, the structure of reasoning into the nature of reality is reflexive: such reasoning always entails an inquiry into the inquiring subject. In other words, there is no abstract domain of pure logic here; subjectivity is always already an integral part of the equation.

There is no way to look into the nature of reality from the outside; querying nature must always act upon itself. This nonduality is highlighted in the discourses of tantra, which we will discuss below as we consider the doctrine of buddha-nature in light of pantheism, a doctrine that likewise presumes no duality between God and world.

BUDDHA-NATURE AND TANTRA

Buddha-nature, as the pure nature of mind and reality, is a theme that extends from Mahāyāna into Vajrayāna, or tantra. Buddha-nature has even been called "what joins *sūtra* and tantra" (Mipam 1987a: 453). While many of the practices of the Vajrayāna are also shared with Mahāyāna and are not different from other Mahāyāna rituals,[3] the practical application of this theory in Vajrayāna takes on a distinctive form.

According to Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa bLo bzang grags pa, 1357–1419), the renowned forefather of the Geluk tradition, what distinguishes Vajrayāna is the practice of deity yoga (Tsongkhapa 1995: 21); that is, identifying with the buddha, or the appearing aspects of the divine (or buddha) nature. He also said that Vajrayāna is called the "resultant vehicle" due to taking the effect as the path (Tsongkhapa 1995: 15–16). In the "causal vehicle" of sūtra one relates to the buddha as a future goal of a causal process of transformation from a sentient being to a buddha. However, in the resultant vehicle of tantra the approach is different; one does not see a separate buddha "out there" to be attained in a distant future; the buddha is approached as an immanently present reality accessible *right now*.

According to Longchenpa, in the "causal vehicle" one sees buddha-nature as a cause that will result in the future event of becoming a buddha, while in the "resultant vehicle" (a.k.a. "tantra") buddha-nature is conceived as the immanently present reality, qualitatively indivisible from its effect, the buddha (Longchenpa 1996b: 1169–70). Not all Buddhist sects follow Longchenpa's formulation *vis-à-vis* buddha-nature, but perceiving the qualities of the buddha here and now is an essential part of the practice of tantra not only in his tradition, but across all major Buddhist sects in Tibet. The importance of buddha-nature in tantra is reflected in the words of Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama:

> The substance of all these paths [*Guhyasamāja*, *Kālacakra*, Great Perfection] comes down to the fundamental innate mind of clear light. Even the sūtras which serve as the basis for Maitreya's commentary in his *Sublime Continuum of the Great Vehicle* [*Uttaratantra*] have this same fundamental mind as the basis of their thought in their discussion of the Buddha nature, or essence of a One Gone Thus (*Tathāgatagarbha, De bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po*), *although the full mode of its practice* is not described as it is in the systems of Highest Yoga Tantra.
>
> (Dalai Lama 1984: 224; emphasis mine)

Thus, the underlying philosophy behind the practice of deity yoga can be said to be the presence of buddha-nature within being(s).

The significance of buddha-nature is evident in the *Secret Essence Tantra* (*Guhyagarbhatantra*), which is the most important tantra in the Nyingma tradition, where the theme of universal buddha-nature – the doctrine that all beings have the innate potential to become buddhas – is extended to embrace a view that everything is already the buddha. Thus, the *Secret Essence Tantra* represents an important turn within Buddhist thought: a shift from "buddha-nature" (*tathāgata-garbha*), the universal *potential* for awakening, to

the "secret-nature" (*guhya-garbha*), the affirmation of universal awakening *right now*. This turn toward immanence is a major feature of the traditions of tantra in Tibet, as well as Buddhist traditions across East Asia.

In China, for instance, in the seventh and eighth centuries (around the same time as the composition of the *Secret Essence Tantra*), buddha-nature came to be interpreted not only as the heritage of sentient beings, but as a quality of insentient objects as well. Robert Sharf has argued that "Zhaozhou's dog," the most famous kōan in the Chan/Zen tradition – where a monk asked, "Does a dog have buddha-nature or not?" and the master said, "Not!" (Jp. *mu*) – is rooted in the historic context of a Chinese debate over precisely the status of buddha-nature in insentient things (Sharf 1999: section IV). As Mahāyāna Buddhism spread through Asia, the direction that the interpretation of buddha-nature took exemplifies a distinctive turn toward the affirmation of an immanent absolute.

I believe that "pantheism" is a useful category with which to make sense of the place of buddha-nature in this turn. Although there may be a variety of pantheisms, in *Concepts of Deity*, H. P. Owen characterizes "pantheists" in general as follows: "'Pantheism' (which is derived from the Greek words for 'all' and 'God') signifies the belief that every existing entity is, in some sense, divine" (1971: 65). A definition from the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* reads: "Pantheism essentially involves two assertions: that everything that exists constitutes a unity and that this all-inclusive unity is divine" (MacIntyre 1971: 34). A pantheistic view undoes the duality between the divine and the world, as Michael Levine states in his pioneering study, *Pantheism: A Non-Theistic Concept of Deity*: "Taken as an alternative to, and denial of, theism and atheism, pantheists deny that what they mean by God (i.e. an all-inclusive Unity) is completely transcendent. They deny that God is 'totally other' than the world" (1997: 2).

In the doctrine of buddha-nature we see a major departure from the duality of God/world in classical theism. In the words of H. P. Owen: "The God of classical theism is *transcendent*. This adjective means … that God is substantially distinct from the world … Conversely the world is not in any sense a part of God" (1971: 34–35). A problem with classical theism is that such a notion of the infinite, which precludes the finite, assumes an unbridgeable ontological gulf between God and the world. Pantheism denies this ontological rift. Pantheism and the doctrine of divine immanence bridge the gap between God and world (see Levine 1997: 6–8).

We have seen how the Mahāyāna doctrine of buddha-nature in the *Sublime Continuum* presents the nature of the buddha as immanent, not a buddha *out there*, separated in space. In tantra, the nature of buddha is not presented as separate in time either, as the goal is not something to be attained in a distant future, but is an immanent reality *right now*. Levine echoes this sentiment in his depiction of the "goal" of pantheism: "The pantheist eschews any notion of their [*sic*] being further goals; for example, the theist's beatific vision; personal immortality; *nirvana*; and even Spinoza's 'blessedness,' interpreted as something other-wordly" (1997: 347). Yet Levine, in his otherwise excellent study of the topic, fails to adequately account for Mahāyāna Buddhism in his characterization of pantheistic practice.

For instance, he states that "The practice of pantheism has never been associated with ritual practice" (Levine 1997: 309). This is quite ironic given the fact that Buddhist scholars such as Tsongkhapa identify the traditions of tantra exclusively with *ritual practice* (rather than with a distinctive philosophical view), and in light of Zen traditions, where we find a profusion of ritual along with a vast literature of anti-intellectual rhetoric. Yet Levine even speculates that ritual may be incompatible with pantheistic belief (1997: 311). Levine

furthermore claims that "in pantheism there is no apparent community of believers organised around their common (though not identical) beliefs by an established body of religious teaching and scripture" (289). Yet the community of Buddhists who study and practice Zen or the *Secret Essence Tantra* clearly have organized communities, and living communities at that.

The category of "pantheism" (as an alternative to atheism or "non-theism") can shed light on important dimensions of the Buddhist tradition, particularly those traditions for which buddha-nature holds a central place. As with pantheism, buddha-nature (and its apotheosis in tantra) is a contested doctrine that shares a tenuous relationship with predominant institutional and orthodox forms of its home tradition. Moreover, it may be that the "antinomian" doctrines of pantheism and buddha-nature have been and continue to be embedded in their host traditions in a fundamentally constitutive way (despite the rhetoric to the contrary).

I wish to argue that the pantheistic "theology" of buddha-nature functions in Buddhism in a way that is parallel to that of pantheism. Pantheism as a category and as a doctrine is often disparaged, misunderstood, and misrepresented. Pantheism in Northwest European traditions has historically been rejected, not because it is irrational, but because it is pagan. Hegel and Spinoza were labeled "pantheists" and even atheists, although they did not describe their own views in those terms. Hegel even denied that Spinoza was an atheist; rather, he said that Spinoza had "too much God" (Hegel 1896: 282). While there may be ambiguity about what constitutes a pantheist, and even less certainty about what pantheistic practice entails, I would like to resuscitate this term to shed light on an important resonance in Buddhist thought, by thinking of the doctrine of buddha-nature as a version of pantheism.

In considering buddha-nature in terms of pantheism, we should remember that the term "theology" (*theologia*) predates classical Christian theology; it was used by Greeks, including Plato. Thus, I not only feel that we *can* speak of Buddhist thought using this term, but that it can be helpful to do so. By speaking of "theology" in a Buddhist context, I have in mind something like Paul Tillich's delineation: "The object of theology is what concerns us ultimately. Only those propositions are theological which deal with their object in so far as it can become a matter of ultimate concern for us" (1951–57: 1:12). The object of *ultimate concern* for Buddhists is nirvana, or the state of the buddha; hence, propositions regarding the buddha are theological when understood along the lines of Tillich's use of the term. To deny Buddhists an ultimate concern, or to not speak of ultimate concern in the context of Buddhism (and thus to not speak of Buddhism theologically), denies the Buddhist claims to nirvana and the buddha.

Moreover, I believe that buddha-nature can be fruitfully considered in parallel to Tillich's "ground of being" theology: "Many confusions in the doctrine of God and many apologetic weaknesses could be avoided if God were understood first of all as being-itself or as the ground of being" (1951–57: 1:235). The positive nature of emptiness, and the pregnant potential of buddha-nature, is reflected in Tillich's discussion of "being": "The same word, the emptiest of all concepts when taken as an abstraction, becomes the most meaningful of all concepts when it is understood as the power of being in everything that has being" (1951–57: 2:11). The buddha-nature, like Tillich's "God" and "being," is not abstract; at least it is not limited to an abstraction. With Tillich, we may say that the "buddha" in buddha-nature is neither an abstract entity nor a person, but that the buddha is certainly not less than a person. Rather, the buddha, like Tillich's "being," is suprapersonal (*überpersönlich*) (see Tillich 1951–57: 2:12). Furthermore, in his *Theology of Culture*, Tillich stated that:

Man discovers *himself* when he discovers God; he discovers something that is identical to himself although it transcends him infinitely, something from which he is estranged, but from which he never has been nor can be separated.

(1964: 10)

It is not surprising that Tillich has been labelled a "pantheist" for making this claim (Westphal 1998: 159–60). As we can see with pantheism and the doctrine of buddha-nature, the infinite is embodied in the finite. The infinite is not pitted against the finite, but the finite is a part of the infinite, and necessarily so. As Hegel (who had been labeled a "pantheist") stated: "The real infinite, far from being a mere transcendence of the finite, always involves the absorption of the finite into its own fuller nature" (Hegel 1873: 78). Compare this sense of the infinite with the infinite of classical theism in Owen's statement: "The 'in' in 'infinite' is to be taken as a negative prefix. It means that God is non-finite. In order to arrive at a true notion of him we must deny to him all those limitations that affect created being" (13). Such a notion of the infinity of God negates the world and makes God an imagined "other" that is separate from the finite world. This kind of dualism has had the consequence that God becomes valorized at the expense of a devalued world. Nietzsche proclaimed that this kind of theism is effectively atheism; his words are echoed by Patrick Masterson:

The atheism of our day, in its reflective philosophical expression, consists chiefly in asserting the impossibility of the coexistence of finite and infinite being. It is maintained that the affirmation of God as infinite being necessarily implies the devaluation of finite being, and in particular, the dehumanizisation of man.

(1971: 1)

Such a devaluation of finite being is not limited to the modern world, where "the death of God has accompanied the slow deadening of the universe" (Keller 2014: 73). We can see similar instances of the devaluation of body and world in other forms of South Asian Buddhist traditions, including medieval Mahāyāna and modern Theravāda. The doctrine of buddha-nature, as a pantheist affirmation of the absolute, can be seen as an alternative to the denigration of being in a Buddhist context. That is, the doctrine of buddha-nature is an alternative to the life-denying doctrines of unrelenting *suffering*, to the basic consciousness that only perpetuates a cycle of existence in distortion in a Yogācāra theory of mind, and an alternative to a Madhyamaka doctrine of ultimate truth that is simply a static emptiness, a mere lack of intrinsic nature.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have seen how buddha-nature is interpreted in various ways within Mahāyāna Buddhism. Buddha-nature is a complex and slippery topic, and it takes on several meanings in Buddhist traditions. As the nature of mind and potential for awakening, buddha-nature also can be seen to provide the philosophical underpinning of Mahāyāna, including the practices of Zen and tantra.

We have seen how this doctrine is identified with both the basic consciousness of Yogācāra and with emptiness in Madhyamaka and how it supplements both of these Mahāyāna schools with a positive ground of being. As the presence of the buddha in the world, buddha-nature is not only interpreted as a groundless emptiness (the lack of intrinsic

nature in things), but also as the ground of being as well. This presence of the buddha in the world reaches its apotheosis in the theory and practice of tantra, where buddha-nature arguably functions as the theoretical and practical foundation of Vajrayāna. This presence, I have suggested, can be understood as a form of "pantheism."

Buddha-nature, like pantheism, is a doctrine of immanence. Thinking about buddha-nature in terms of pantheism can shed light on important facets of its place in Buddhist traditions. I hope to have shown this here, and to have sparked a new direction in thinking about buddha-nature, one that will enrich further conversations about Buddhism and pantheism.

NOTES

1   *Densely Arrayed Sūtra* (*Gandavyūhasūtra*) Peking edition #778, vol. 29: 152.2.1.

2   Such a circularity in the case of buddha-nature is articulated well in Paul Tillich's "mystical apriori," a foundation of dialectical inquiry in the context of his Christian theology. We will consider Tillich's theology in relation to buddha-nature below, but a statement he makes is relevant here:

> In both the empirical and metaphysical approaches, as well as in the much more numerous cases of their mixture, it can be observed that the a priori which directs the induction and the deduction is a type of mystical experience. Whether it is "being itself" (Scholastics) or "universal substance" (Spinoza), whether it is "beyond subjectivity and objectivity' (James) or the "identity of spirit and nature" (Schelling), whether it is "universe" (Schleiermacher) or "cosmic whole" (Hocking), whether it is "value creating process" (Whitehead) or "progressive integration" (Wieman), whether it is "absolute spirit" (Hegel) or "cosmic person" (Brightman) – each of these concepts is based on an immediate experience of something ultimate in value and being of which one can become intuitively aware. Idealism and naturalism differ very little in their starting point … Both are dependent on a point of identity between the experiencing subject and the ultimate … The theological concepts of both idealists and naturalists are rooted in a "mystical apriori," an awareness of something that transcends the cleavage between subject and object. And if in the course of a "scientific' procedure this a priori is discovered, its discovery is only possible because it was present from the very beginning. This is the circle which no religious philosopher can escape. And it is by no means a vicious one. Every understanding of spiritual things (*Geistwissenschaft*) is circular.
>
> (Tillich 1951–57: 1:9)

3   Indeed, if we had access to living communities of Buddhist Mahāyāna practice in India like we have in East Asia and Tibet, we can reasonably speculate that we would find many rituals (e.g., *buddhānusmṛti*) that resemble Vajrayāna practices.

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BODY

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David Gardiner

INTRODUCTION

While the English word "body" entails a wide range of meaning just as do the Pāli and Sanskrit *kāya*, if we begin our reflection with the flesh and blood ordinary body of human beings, it is clear that the Buddhist tradition takes this body seriously. Any portrayal of the tradition as being other-worldly in the sense of not caring about what human bodies do, for good and for ill, how to use them skillfully, how to develop them well together with the functions of speech and mind, how to "perfect" them, how to imagine in detail super-normal bodies, and more – any such representation lands far off target. Discourse that takes bodies seriously is plentifully prevalent in classical Buddhist texts.

The tradition on many occasions also discusses bodies inventively, bizarrely, takes them as objects of disgust and delight, and addresses them with a gender-discriminatory gaze. The Buddhist tradition does not ignore the body. How could it? How can we?

This chapter will not attempt an encyclopedic or historical survey of the topic of the body in Buddhism. It is intended as a journey of flight through topographies of interest, ones that ought to reveal some of the breadth and depth of Buddhist thought on the matter of bodies. I will offer examples of many different considerations of body from various Buddhist traditions. The essay's sections accord not with ideas derived from the tradition but instead stem from the author's chosen vision for expression.

ORDINARY BODIES

As later discussion will reveal, the ordinary human body is in many ways seen to be quite extraordinary when investigated thoroughly. Here, however, I will focus on the more-or-less conventional body that most of us think of when we hear the term.

Meditation

For the purposes of developing the meditative qualities, or skills, of stillness and insight, a common practice in many Buddhist traditions is to contemplate one's own body. In fact, in the seminal discourse of the Pāli Canon called "The Foundations of Mindfulness"

(Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta), the Buddha outlines four foci of attention: mindfulness of the body, of feelings, of mental states, and of phenomenal experience (according to categories known as *dharma*). A standard method for cultivating mindfulness of the body is to begin by developing awareness of the breath: its general movement in and out, as well as a more refined awareness of subtle textures of the breath and the body's various movements and sensations that accompany breathing. While some people new to meditation might naively think of it as generally leading to an "out of the body" experience (and, granted, Buddhist practitioners on occasion do work toward this), this foundational Buddhist practice rather aims very much for an *in the body* experience: the ordinary tendency of our thoughts to occupy our awareness is hereby sheared through by the directive to pay close attention to what is happening in one's body and even to the components of a body itself. It is a very grounding practice that serves to counteract the flightiness of conceptual thought and its centrality in our sense of self and of world.

Also, when coupled with the meditation on feelings (referring mostly not to emotions but to the feeling tone – pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral – of sensory experiences), as well as on mental states (emotions are included here), mindfulness of the body presents one with awareness of how emotions are deeply linked with bodily sensations and might even grow out from them. Thus mindfulness of the body serves various purposes including stilling the mind, becoming more conscious of (and thus careful about) bodily movement and gesture, and by natural extension generating awareness of how our engagements with the "outer" world through actions of the body, and of speech, are deeply entwined in the nexus of feelings that arise from the body.

Body meditation is normally, but not always, conducted piecemeal, by focusing awareness on its parts one at a time, sometimes in what is known as "body scanning." Traditional practices employ detailed knowledge of anatomy (gained from sources such as dissection and observance of corpses) such that attention gets directed at bones, muscles, tendons, major and minor organs, blood vessels and so on. Traditional teachings also invite investigation into the fact that one's body is comprised of the same basic elements present in other nonsentient physical objects: the elements of earth, fire, water, and air. In this way one can develop both awareness of the dependence of one's body on external factors and a sense of participation in the universal processes of the vast material world of which the body is merely one part. These reflections help to overcome an attachment to a sense of "possessing" our own body and can thus lead to a growing indifference to, or equanimity toward, both physical pleasure and pain. Interestingly, meditation on one's own body parts is not necessarily distinguished significantly from a traditional meditation on a corpse, a practice that entails observing it through its successive stages of decomposition ending in dry, sun-worn bones. In fact, the meditator is commonly urged to see her own body as being just a heartbeat away from a corpse and to reflect deeply on how very impermanent and fragile her body really is. Such contemplation serves to counter the tendency to repress awareness of our natural mortality, a tendency that is attributed to a basic ignorance that can contribute to various forms of suffering.

Reflection on the body is also used to help overcome lustful attachment to other bodies. Thinking objectively about the actual under-the-skin contents can wean one from idealized attraction to bodies that on the surface might seem lovely. Early treatises often describe in detail unsightly features of real bodies, such as oozing pus and excrement, and refer to the body in general as being like a leaking bag of filth. Traditional texts appear to have more references to the repulsive nature of female bodies, a fact that likely reflects both the

dominance of males in the monastic establishments for (and by) whom the texts were written, and a pan-Indian perception of the impurity of female bodies (due in part to the distinguishing feature of menstruation). In either case, texts describing the actual yuckiness as opposed to the idealized loveliness of the human form aim to reduce the lustful attraction that is not only an obstacle for a stable monastic commitment but is also understood as an ultimate source of suffering for laypeople as well.

Ethics and Karma

Behavioral ethics in Buddhism uses three categories: body, speech and mind, representing respectively the domains of physical, verbal, and mental activity. While mental actions (thoughts, beliefs, intentions, and so on) are widely understood to be the source of all activities of body and speech, and thus are of paramount importance in ethical training, great emphasis is also placed on cultivating virtuous physical and verbal behavior. Buddhist ethics tends to highlight the role of restraint, which reflects its commitment to nonviolence and recognition that we naturally express ourselves in ways that are not well considered and that thus result in harm to others as well as to ourselves. Restraint of body traditionally entails attention to the domains of: killing, stealing, harmful sexual conduct, and harmful use of intoxicants. Laypeople often take vows to restrain from engaging in these actions, as do monastics by the requirement of ordination.

Yet restraint is complemented in Buddhist ethics by exhortations to practice virtue. Thus the ten nonvirtues (of body, speech, and mind) are balanced by a list of their opposites (telling the truth instead of lying) that are encouraged as virtuous practices. In relation to the body, Buddhists are urged to respect life, value the possessions of others, practice sexuality with thoughtfulness, and to use intoxicants wisely if at all (monastics cannot use them and some laypeople opt out as well). In this way, the tradition of ethics in Buddhism follows other aspects of the Buddhist path (such as cultivation of meditative stabilization and of insight) in highlighting both things to be "given up" and things to be "taken up." The path of practice is not merely ascetic or negational, but also entails significant injunctions toward cultivating qualities that will bring more wisdom, peace, and happiness into the world.

One result of virtuous behavior is physical beauty. Lore has it that Abraham Lincoln (and even Albert Camus) said that while a person is not responsible for his face at birth, he is by the time he is forty years old. The implication is that one's behavior and intention can overcome unfortunate genetic inheritance because character is molded over time and becomes visible in one's face. Of course, Buddhists would agree, and go further to assert that behavior in the previous lifetime impacts one's physical features at birth, although they would not deny that later intention and the results of social and environmental conditioning are also contributing factors in physiognomy.

The Buddha himself is described as exceedingly attractive throughout his life, a quality attributed to his assiduous practice of virtue in previous lives. However, he also is reported to have rebuked one of his disciples who wanted constantly to be near him because the disciple was so amazed by his beauty. The Buddha told the disciple that as far as attractiveness goes, the body is nothing special and that he should instead place more interest in the Buddha's teachings, saying, "one who sees the Dharma sees me."

Another interesting dimension of Buddhist ethics in relation to the body is the understanding of how one's virtuous behavior in the world is understood in terms of physicality. Here are two examples. Since a bodhisattva (a buddha in training) operates

under a vow to make efforts to liberate all beings from suffering and its causes, the great compassion, generosity, patience, and effort that a bodhisattva practices have an immense impact on the beings with whom she comes into contact. This sphere of beneficent influence is the beginnings of the "buddha field" that will emerge once the bodhisattva attains complete awakening. Within this emerging field, a bodhisattva's virtuous actions "ripen" other living beings by helping them and drawing them as well toward a path of virtue and of liberation. This metaphor is fascinating in its corporeal imagery. It is as if a radiant energy of goodness embraces and nurtures and almost "cooks" others so that they achieve the fruition of their deepest capacity for well-being (Mrozik 2007). Another example is also about the practice of a bodhisattva. In her virtuous engagements with beings, in some texts a bodhisattva is urged to imagine that her own body plays a role in the world much like that of a *stūpa* (a sacred reliquary monument) in that beings should be drawn to her virtue and goodness just as they are drawn to worship at a *stūpa*.

Goodness

Lastly, here I will touch upon the theme of the benefits of bodily pleasure. Lest we assume that the frequently cited Buddhist cautions about the pitfalls of attachment to sensuality indicate a total disdain for all matters of physical comfort and joy, it is helpful to note that not only is taking good care of one's body encouraged, but some states of intense physical contentment are seen as conducive to spiritual progress.

Caring for one's body can be understood as falling into one of the many expressions of a "middle way" in Buddhist thought and practice. A middle way in Buddhism is not a view or a condition that combines two opposing factors, or that balances them (as is sometimes erroneously thought), but is rather a position in between two opposing factors that is said to *avoid* the two "extremes" under consideration. A classical example of a normative middle way is the Buddha's renunciation of the sensual indulgence of his youthful life in a palace as well as his rejection of the path of ascetic self-denial that dominated some years of his life after leaving home. The middle way that he adopted and later taught is one that avoids both indulgence and denial. This pattern has parallels in Buddhist philosophy, of avoiding asserting that something either truly and substantially exists or that it does not exist at all, as well as in more affective terms such as avoiding hatred, on the one hand, and attachment on the other. This pattern reflects a deeper polarity in Buddhist thought that sees the two generic reactive tendencies of attraction and repulsion – and their emotional expressions as attachment and hatred – as not only productive of most of our suffering but also as deriving from a default flaw in human cognition (ignorance) that can be corrected through insight practice.

A canonical passage depicts the Buddha explaining to a disciple, who was unclear about what a "middle way" approach toward the body must entail, that this orientation is similar to what the disciple already knew from his experience playing an ancient equivalent of the sitar or veena. When the disciple responded that the instrument sounds best when the strings are wound neither too tightly nor too loosely, the Buddha followed by saying that it is the same with how we treat the body. If we are neither too strict (such as allowing insufficient food or sleep, or engaging in self-mortification) nor too lax (overeating or oversleeping, indulging in pleasurable feelings regularly, taking little exercise, and so on), the body will "sound" best like the instrument, and one will be most capable of pursuing spiritual work effectively.

Another account has the Buddha recalling – at a time when his practice of self-mortification had exhausted his ability to make spiritual progress – a moment in his childhood when he sat beneath a shaded tree on a hot, sunny day observing someone working in the fields. He reported that he entered a deep state of meditative trance at this time that was made possible because of the salutary effects on his body and mind of the pleasantness of the environment. This recollection prompted him to realize that his harsh practice of self-denial was not an effective or healthy means to achieve his desired goal of liberation. Thus he adopted his middle way approach that included taking good care of his body.

Finally, there are clear examples of Buddhist practices that induce states of physical well-being that help in reaching higher stages of realization. In the Pāli Canon there are passages describing the deep states of meditative concentration known as *jhāna* (Skt. *dhyāna*; traditionally there are four that unfold as successively "deeper"). In describing the second *jhāna,* the Buddha says of the practitioner:

> With the subsiding of thought and examination, he enters and dwells in the second *jhāna*, which has internal confidence and unification of mind … and has rapture and happiness born of concentration … Just as though there were a lake whose waters welled up from below and it had no inflow from east, west, north, or south, and would not be replenished from time to time by showers of rain [the implication here is of no external stimulus whatsoever], then the cool fount of water welling up in the lake would make the cool water drench, steep, fill, and pervade the lake, so that there would be no part of the whole lake that is not pervaded by cool water; so too, a monk makes the rapture and happiness born of concentration drench, steep, fill, and pervade this body, so that there is no part of his whole body that is not pervaded by the rapture and happiness born of concentration.

> (Bodhi 2005: 251)

This remarkable metaphor speaks eloquently of a state of bodily pleasure derived from meditation. The text later explains that the deep states of *jhāna* – all of which it describes using luscious somatic metaphors as above – establish a foundation of concentration and purification that is exceptionally supportive of powerful reaches of insight that can bring about full liberation. While the deep *jhāna* states are not in all Buddhist traditions held to be necessary for achieving liberation, their "texture" of imperturbability and contentment is understood to be a richly productive platform for attaining wisdom. Thus bodily pleasure is not always to be avoided.

Further, in the Vajrayāna or Tantric tradition, there are abundant examples of utilizing states of mental and physical pleasure as springboards, as "charging energies" for the higher stages of the path. These Tantric contemplative practices entail harnessing the subtle energies within the body to create a confluence of great bliss, from which bursts forth the final fire of wisdom that destroys all ignorance and attachment. The twentieth-century Tibetan master Lama Thubten Yeshe (1935–84) used to entice his Western students by telling them that if they practiced with enough dedication they would be able to "taste the chocolate." He was luring them into the practice by describing it, in captivating Western imagery, as leading to immense sensory gratification. Lama Yeshe and other masters are generally careful to distinguish, however, the means from the goal. And even when the goal of liberation or buddhahood is itself described as being blissful in both body and mind, it is

characterized as a bliss completely unlike any familiar one (what sort of bliss is coated in nonattachment?), and as an energy that reaches out tirelessly and skillfully in the service of all beings.

IMAGINED BODIES

The remaining sections of this essay will by necessity overlap in ways with topics in the previous section and with one another.

What I mean by "imagined" bodies is not ones that are unreal or merely constructs of the mind (we shall not endeavor to evaluate truth claims here), but rather ones that most humans will not likely encounter or experience; and thus they are ones that they can only imagine. Traditional accounts indicate that it is possible for us to experience a much wider variety of bodies than we ordinarily conceive. A few examples follow.

Śākyamuni's Bodies

A good place to begin is to take the example of the body of the historical Buddha. In addition to reports that his body was very attractive, it is also said that his body was adorned by unusual characteristics that marked him as a "great man" (*mahāpuruṣa*), a paragon of extraordinary spiritual accomplishment over many lifetimes. These marks are traditionally enumerated as thirty-two major and eighty minor ones. They include a protuberance on the crown of his head (*uṣṇīṣa*), a curl of hair between his eyebrows that emits light, webs of light between his fingers and toes, a sheathed penis, arms that reach to his knees when standing straight, dharma wheel images on his palms and the bottom of his feet, forty teeth, and many more (Powers 2009: 234–39). To a modern sensibility, some of these characteristics might render the Buddha less than fully attractive. Surely beauty is in the eyes of the beholder, eyes molded by cultural conditioning. Naturally we have no way to discover in fact how his body actually appeared to people in his day.

In all Buddhist traditions, Śākyamuni Buddha was understood to possess multiple embodiments. The most fundamental classification is of two embodiments: form (*rūpa*) and truth or reality (*dharma*). These are not so much distinct units or parcels as they are different collections of qualities manifested by the Buddha (and by extension by all buddhas). In non-Mahāyāna traditions, while his form body comprises the unique physical features described above, including as well his melodious speech – which thus in sum represents the multitude of ways he attracted and taught beings and palpably modeled the middle way – his truth body represents his vast collection of virtues, of qualities of mind, of his inner states of insight, liberation and ever-present compassion. In Mahāyāna traditions this same basic two-body model also holds, but with differences and additions. The truth body is now not so much the totality of the Buddha's virtuous mental states, but is rather a subtler, and more essentially distinguishing (from all nonawakened beings) quality of his complete freedom from all greed, hatred, and delusion – his perfected embodiment of nirvana – by virtue of his incisive wisdom that breaks through all ignorance by seeing things as they truly are. The truth body in Mahāyāna is thus a more transcendent dimension of a buddha's being: others might possess to varying degrees great patience, generosity, and love, but only a buddha possesses or embodies a total freedom from all entrapments in mental fabrications and confusion. Only a buddha experiences – in a thoroughgoing manner, fully with his entire mind and body – complete freedom from ignorance and suffering at every moment.

Consequently, a buddha's form body, on the other hand, expresses his virtues, ones rooted in compassion, that are "perfected" because his full wisdom permits no flaws to appear in them. (There are also divisions of the truth body in some Mahāyāna traditions, but these, while of fascinating philosophical interest, are of too hair-splitting a nature to discuss here.)

Other Buddha Bodies

Furthermore, Mahāyāna traditions elaborated on theories of buddha bodies by adding one or more embodiments of a buddha. The complete enjoyment body (*saṃbhoga-kāya*) stands somewhere between the form and truth bodies. By some accounts, the enjoyment body comprises the extremely subtle and creative qualities of mind that allow a buddha to communicate with beings in nonverbal, perhaps telepathic or subconscious, ways. This body is sometimes said to have two aspects, that of "enjoyment for self" and "enjoyment for others." The former seems to comprise the inner states of vision, of indescribable experiences of interdependence, and of the sheer bliss of enlightened freedom that buddhas have, while the latter points to the ways in which the former are employed, playfully and skillfully, in the subtler domains of (again, perhaps telepathic) communication, to aid in beings' spiritual transformation. By other more abundant accounts, enjoyment bodies are ways in which buddhas appear in parallel or distant realms where only beings of advanced attainment and motivation (compassion) can transport themselves – during meditation or after death – in order to receive in a less diluted and distracted manner than is usually possible "on earth" more effective and intense training toward buddhahood (see the chapter by Jones in this volume). These are the bodies of buddhas who reside in buddha fields and pure lands not exactly of this earth, normally conceived to be across the galaxy or galaxies somewhere (but sometimes understood as accessible here and now, either through telepathic travel or through access to parallel or alternative dimensions of sorts that might entail "seeing" our ordinary world with extraordinary eyes). For example, the buddha Amitābha, who resides in the Pure Land Sukhāvatī far out in space in the Western direction, has a body that is huge – miles high – and it radiates ruby-red light in all directions that touches all beings in all realms. And his body spontaneously and ceaselessly conveys Dharma teachings that are intrinsically embedded not only in his body's radiance but through other embodiments of his power in the form of trees and rivers and ducks, all of which mysteriously exude sounds heard as teachings of impermanence, selflessness, love, and so on. These embellishments of his pure land are none other than manifestations of his compassionate vow to create a paradise for the benefit of dedicated bodhisattvas. They are thus part of his enjoyment body.

Tantric Bodies

In the contemplations of the Tantric or Vajrayāna tradition, in addition to visualizing subtle energies flowing through intricate systems of channels inside one's body, the external appearance of the body is also extraordinary. In essence, the practitioner who has received an initiation that permits such engagement imagines that her own body dissolves into light and reemerges in the form of one of the "deities" (buddhas, bodhisattvas) commonly depicted, for example, in Tibetan scroll (*thangka*) paintings. This can involve imagining that one's body is no longer the familiar human form but might take on, say, the white color and four (or one thousand) arms of the bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokiteśvara. And this envisioned body is not made of sold flesh, but is rather of transparent light, like a rainbow

(or a hologram). This practice is done with utmost sincerity of intention, and an advanced practitioner should be able to hold numerous intricate details in their newly imagined self. And many deities are commonly used, some more pacific like Avalokiteśvara and some who are fierce in appearance such as Yamāntaka – the wrathful form of the bodhisattva of wisdom, Mañjuśrī – who is dark blue, has a horse-like head, sharp protruding fangs, and flames surrounding his body like a halo (to name only a few features). All of these bodily details are visualized as if they were one's own. The practitioner's body transforms, in a serious exercise of re-envisioning self and world, into a 3D light body with unusual colors and appendages. These practices are described as an effective use of imagination to reprogram one's attachment to a particularly conditioned sense of self toward a new sense that is grounded in a gut-level familiarity with energies of unlimited compassionate activity and unlimited courageous, fearless action in the name of freeing beings from suffering. What a creative sort of somatic therapy this is! (McClintock 2000: 268–70.)

To conclude this section, we can note briefly the bodies in realms that are considered possible destinations for birth for beings not fortunate enough to be born as humans. The animal realm we know pretty well, but a reminder here is in order with respect to the remarkable, amazing range of bodies of animals on our planet that we can see in film documentaries, for example, of deep-sea creatures or of insects. The more usual dogs, zebras, sheep, salmon, and sparrows only scratch the surface of possible life forms. Some bodies relatively nearby us are totally fantastic, grotesque, and altogether alien. What kinds of karma helped to form such beings?

Other realms imagined in Buddhist understanding include hungry ghosts (*preta*), hell beings (*naraka*), and gods (*deva*). While these life-forms are not visible to all of us, many contemplatives report encountering them in meditation and/or recalling a previous life in these realms. Hungry ghosts have bodies with needle-thin necks and potbellies. Their appetites are never satisfied, so they are always frustrated by craving. These are strange, painful bodies. Hell beings have experiences of extreme cold that lead to freezing to death and magically reappearing again in the same body only to repeat the process (this goes as well for flaming hells, and more). Their bodies are excruciating. The gods have more fun. Some have subtle bodies – some are even comprised of light – with few sensory frustrations and many delights. They live long, and easily, and many of them forget that they were actually born in the realm at one point (thinking they are immortal) and never imagine they will die. There is a traditional list of five signs accompanying the death of *deva*s that depicts their gradual and shocking realization that their glorious bodies of light and delight are fading and moving toward final decay. Their long, deep, and sadly naive attachment to their *deva* life tends to cause intense dismay at this unexpected and rude transformation, such that fear and anger burst forth with a fury of such karmic force that it can propel them next to a lower birth as an animal or even a hell being. The vicissitudes of bodily forms are graphically portrayed in these tales.

MAGICAL BODIES

This category – again, one constructed by the author, not representing traditional taxonomies – covers bodies that possess properties most people would consider supernatural or magical. These properties can sometimes also be found in the bodies described in the previous sections. Here we highlight examples of bodies that perform supernatural feats.

Magical Śākyamuni

Stories of Śākyamuni's life include various "miracles." It seems these do not get much attention in popular circles in the West, perhaps due to a (mis)perception that Buddhism is not so much a religion as it is a philosophy or psychology and that it does not share the supernatural or superstitious elements that some other religions are seen to possess. Nonetheless, it is clear that the tradition portrays its founder as something quite other than an ordinary human, a fact evidenced not only by his remarkable bodily features described above but also by (1) the understanding, based on his own declarations, that unlike other humans he had broken free from the ignorance that traps one in the suffering cycles of saṃsāra; and (2) that he could do things with his body and speech and mind that others could not. Mahāyāna texts probably have more portrayals of amazing feats, yet across all traditions his displays of supernormal physical behavior include levitation, healing wounds, spewing fire and water from his body, speaking in a way that even beings who did not know his language could understand, traveling to other worlds (with or without the body), radiating light from all over his body that revealed visions of other buddha lands, and more. Even the relatively tamer Pāli Canon has the Buddha saying the following about the bodily capacities of an advanced practitioner:

> Monks, for one in whom mindfulness immersed in the body is cultivated, developed, pursued, handed the reins and taken as a basis, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken, ten benefits can be expected. Which ten?… He wields manifold supranormal powers. Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one. He appears. He vanishes. He goes unimpeded through walls, ramparts, and mountains as if through space. He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water. He walks on water without sinking as if it were dry land. Sitting cross-legged he flies through the air like a winged bird. With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and moon, so mighty and powerful. He exercises influence with his body even as far as the Brahma worlds.
>
> (*Kevatta Sutta*)

Other Body Magic

Stories of wonder-working monastics also abound outside the sūtras. Accounts of those who transform their bodies in miraculous ways are common throughout the tradition. A fine case is the legend of Padmasambhava (known in Tibet as Guru Rinpoche), who in order to pacify demons in Tibet who opposed the establishment of the Buddhadharma, manifested in as many as eight different physical embodiments: male, female, fierce monster-like, and so on. Numerous are the tales of monastics who can fly, make rainfall, and perform all sorts of supernormal bodily feats (Kieshnick 1997 and Weddle 2010).

Upon death, highly realized practitioners are also reported to manifest unusual physical signs. Relics of certain masters, obtained after their cremation, reportedly include strange gem-like substances normally not available elsewhere. These are commonly recognized as condensations of the masters' special spiritual capacities and become themselves objects of reverence and power, and they are often placed inside a *stūpa* or statue as part of the process of consecrating these objects. Revered teachers in some traditions are also said to self-mummify. After death their bodies are preserved in reasonably recognizable form for

decades and longer. Reports on some masters include bodies that remain – after what would ordinarily seem to be death – warm to the touch and with hair and nails growing, also for decades and beyond. Other accounts include bodies of realized masters that shrink upon death, or ones that even disappear entirely, dissolving into an aura of "rainbow light" that signifies their having achieved full awakening.

Other examples of bodily "magic" in Mahāyāna scriptures include various feats by the lay master practitioner Vimalakīrti, who was able to empower the Buddha's disciple Śāriputra not only to travel to another world system to retrieve chairs for a gathering but to then place these chairs that were miles tall (different scales of size in different worlds) inside a small room. Śāriputra was amazed that this was possible. Then there are the truly mind-expanding visionary excursions through bodies small and large portrayed in the remarkable *Flower Ornament Discourse* (*Avataṃsaka Sūtra*).

The philosophical truths of the lack of independent existence of all things (emptiness) and of interdependence are graphically depicted in some of the most creative imagery imaginable. The body of Vairocana Buddha not only emits rays of light from his forehead that touch all realms and all beings throughout space, but his physical body itself encompasses all beings and all realms within it. Within a single hair pore on his body appear clusters, roiling clouds of bodhisattvas more numerous than all the atoms of the entire universe. The body of a bodhisattva in deep meditation not only holds within it the bodies and activities of all other bodhisattvas and buddhas across all space and time, but all these other beings also incorporate his body within theirs. Each fully holds every detail of the other, of all others, in a cosmic dance of interpenetration that mysteriously also allows for each individual being to fully remain itself. Analogies are given such as how mirrors can contain reflections of other mirrors, back and forth and ad infinitum, without any of the particular features of any one image being compromised. Extensive and richly creative employment of the imagery of light, reflecting and interpenetrating, conveys an almost palpable world of interdependence. At once abstract and miraculous, the language of this text comes across also at times as firmly grounded, as rooted in contemplative experience, as expressive of the wonders of corporeal existence that unfold when one investigates openly and fully the marvelous characteristics of our embodiment and allows the mind to penetrate these realities deeply (Cleary 1993 and McMahan 2002).

PRECIOUS BODIES

Mysterious and magical bodies abound in the worlds imagined and experienced in the Buddhist traditions. And yet, to return to the notion of an "ordinary human body," it is nonetheless significant that a simple human birth is commonly appreciated in Buddhist teachings as a very precious thing. To take a human embodiment is understood to represent the accumulation of significant good karma and to provide a unique opportunity for further positive transformation. Of all the realms of possible birth, the human one is the most fortunate because of its generally superior capacity for achieving the Buddhist goals of liberation and awakening. This is so because the lower realms (hells, hungry ghosts, and animals) are too mentally dull and physically and mentally agonized for their denizens to be able to think or act in a manner conducive to transforming their minds toward liberation. They simply have (in the vast majority of cases) not the freedom, the inch to move or to grow, which would permit even a tiny "glance upward" that might generate the virtuous karma to get a better incarnation.

And *deva*s also have few chances to think of liberation. They are too ensconced in the pleasurable fruits of past good karma and/or rarified meditative states to have even an inkling of the wish to "break free from *saṃsāra*." Most do not realize they are still in the cycle! And when their long and happy *deva* existence finally comes to an end, and their bodies of blissful light are fading and their minds are terrorized by fear, it is then too late to develop effective intentions contrary to their deeply-habituated states of contentment. So while nearly all beings (there are some rare exceptions) in the lower and higher realms – due respectively to excessive anguish or heedless complacency – lack the freedom and the motivation to spiritually progress, the humans in the middle have just the right balance of suffering and happiness to enable them to access both the desire and the resources that can free them from the cycle of existence. Thus a human body is a precious one that ought not to be taken for granted because it is endowed with great opportunities.

But then how can we reconcile this high regard for a human incarnation with the disdain for bodily attachment in the meditations on the filth of the body described earlier? A helpful approach is to understand that the body can play multiple roles in a life. It can be the source or object of lustful intentions that result in only temporary satisfaction that is inevitably linked with frustration (not to mention violence, in some cases); or it can be a vessel for the cultivation of great generosity, patience, and compassion. In the former case, restraint is recommended and methods are employed to reduce suffering. In the latter, positive engagement – and attending to bodily health – are encouraged because of the goodness that the body can bring forth. Thus these two very different valuations of the body complement rather than conflict with one another. As a pair, they follow the general Buddhist pattern operating in models of the Path where things are both "given up" and "taken up" (Collins 1997). The body is precious and deserves good care insofar as it can be a source of skillful activity that reduces suffering and increases happiness (in both self and others).

In the *Discourse Spoken by Vimalakīrti* (*Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*), the lay master Vimalakīrti feigns sickness in order to teach people various things about bodies and life. He explains that the body is in reality like a bubble or ball of foam in its fragility, vulnerability, and its basic nonpermanent and nonreliable nature. His discourse touches many subjects, one of which is the emptiness of the body as an intrinsically solid and truly existent thing. We find passages with similar import in the famous *Heart Discourse of the Perfection of Wisdom* (*Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya Sūtra*), in which we are told that "in emptiness there is no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind; no form, no sound, no smell, no taste, no texture, no things to be known." The body and all its experiences are ultimately empty. No part of the body is permanent or independent. It is not the solid, steady support for self that we tend to implicitly believe that it is. So what is the preciousness of this body? Again, there are different ways of looking at the body. Upon thorough investigation one can discover its ultimate emptiness, the absence of any qualities that the unreflective mind assumes. Yet the body is here, it is aging, it can hurt – and it can also be the foundation for meditation, for kindness, and for liberation. *Both* sides need to be held together: the ultimate as well as the conventional. And it is most definitely the conventional body that gets employed creatively in the Path.

Theorizing about the emptiness of the body can – when the skillfulness that holds both sides together is weak – bring unfortunate consequences. This is a subject of feminist critique of the emptiness teaching. Various texts elaborate on the ultimate emptiness of gender distinctions. The *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* has a marvelous chapter (at once profound and hilarious) in which the disciple Śāriputra is speaking with a very wise goddess who decides

to "mess" with him by magically exchanging their bodies. As in the episode of magic that Vimalakīrti performed when bringing enormous chairs into a tiny room, Śāriputra here is flabbergasted again, even more so because this time his body has become a woman's! The goddess uses the opportunity to preach about the emptiness of gender (and then kindly reverses the magic to Śāriputra's great relief). And yet this very discourse, which is based on a profound analysis of the constructed and thus relative nature of both our bodies and our value systems, may have helped support lax thinking about gendered embodiment, thinking that fails to take seriously *on the conventional level* the truth that differential treatment of males and females is a real and painful feature of social life. Holding both sides together here means remembering that suffering and its causes are conventional realities that the Buddha took seriously. Bodies and their pains are at least very much relatively real. If they are held to be not so, then the Buddhist path has no purchasing power at all.

CONCLUSION

In concluding, it seems fitting to return to the topic of the classification of buddha "bodies" to note that some of these are actually corporeal and some are more like states of mental realization. This idealized model for comprehending what is a buddha thus covers both domains of body and mind. This balanced coverage seems appropriate in a variety of ways. The traditional Buddhist breakdown of what comprises a person is the five aggregates of form, feeling, concepts, volition, and consciousness. These five get summarized as "name and form" (*nāma-rūpa*), which refers to the last four ("name") as categories for mental phenomena, while the first is physical. In traditional discourse, the term "name and form" is shorthand for "person" and basically means "mind and body."

But while the tradition makes this division regularly, it also emphasizes in various ways that the two are quite interdependent. Note how in the above discussion of ethics and karma, intention propels action, which in turn impacts physical constitution. Such an emphasis on interdependence is abundant in traditional literature. If Buddhist mind–body theorizing sounds dualistic, it is so only in a distinctly qualified way: neither portion is understood to be entirely independent. Further, the very division of buddhahood into bodies of form and of truth/reality reveals a Buddhist understanding that liberation or awakening is an experience or state that is at once mental and physical. While the truth body is, on the one hand, an inner state of wisdom consciousness, it is nonetheless called a body.

In the Theravāda tradition, Calling this wisdom dimension a "body" fits with the Theravāda tradition's view that this term indicates the "collection of virtues" that a buddha possesses, a metaphorical rendering that is not expressly corporeal in reference but still carries poignant implications of quasi-tangible impact. And in Mahāyāna theories about the truth body we also see a clear tendency to grasp this dimension of buddhahood as an inner state of realization.

However, it is not so simple. In particular, modern Westerners, with leanings toward dualisms, need to be vigilant in resisting the impulse to assume that Buddhist awakening takes place all "in the mind." A buddha's truth body might be invisible, but one who observes a buddha can possibly infer its presence. If, as the tradition asserts, a buddha is one who is perfectly free of greed, hatred, and delusion and who also has great compassion, then when present with a buddha a discerning person might notice something unusual: a remarkable combination of utter freedom and whole engagement. A buddha's body and

mind are both somehow free of heaviness and clutter, and yet at the same time are fully and energetically present.

A buddha who possesses both a form body and a truth body cannot *show* us the truth body. But it could be said to be palpably present in the delightful and untiring manner of her engagement with the world. A buddha's truth body is her firm grounding in groundlessness. She will thus appear "grounded," even though this appearance is due to a realization of the groundlessness that is emptiness. Such a model of liberated integration – hinted at in the *Heart Sūtra*'s famous verse that "form is emptiness and that very emptiness is form" – is not only a helpful philosophical reminder that the mind-body problem needs to be treated with subtle care. It is also an exhortation for all Buddhists to commit to cultivating both worldly skills and transcendent insights and to see these as complementary, mutually reinforcing paths of practice. The final word here will be the Buddha's. Regarding the centrality and complexity of "body" in life in general, not only related to Buddhist practice, he said, "It is in this fathom-long body, with its perceptions and thoughts, that we find the world." Where else, and with what else, could we possibly find it?

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BUDDHIST ART FOR THE WORLD

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Marylin M. Rhie

INTRODUCTION

Buddhist art embodies the Buddhist teaching (Dharma) and is, in essence, an expression of the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṃgha. Buddhist art can range from a single brushstroke to monumental structures. Many variants have been produced over the centuries in most of the regions of Asia as Buddhism spread from its origins in India. Even from the lifetime of Śākyamuni Buddha there are some archaeological remains, such as the foundations of the Jīvakārāma at the foot of Mt. Gṛdhrakūṭa near Rājgir in Central India where Śākyamuni spent several rain retreats during the period of his teaching.

The earliest Buddhist art seems to have developed with the founding of monasteries and the veneration of sites connected with the Buddha's life. Some elements of the structures were even stipulated by Buddha himself as guidelines for monastic living, ways of worship and veneration and for the attaining of merit that would benefit one's aspirations for liberation from *saṃsāra* (the phenomenal world; the world of the five *skandhas*, the components of the psycho-physical makeup of sentient beings). Later, individual expressions would arise, but usually all forms of Buddhist art are made in connection with practice according to the Buddhist teachings. Here attention is focused on a few examples of Buddhist art – from India, China, Korea, Japan, and Tibet – that superbly reveal Buddhist characteristics and are analyzed primarily to understand their Buddhist content. Any analysis is limited, and there is usually no clearly definitive interpretation *in lieu* of outright indisputable historical or written evidences. Rather, the interpretive potential oftentimes simply depends upon the viewer's capabilities and sensitivities in regard to the visual arts, Buddhist doctrine, and practice. So it is open to all for individual consideration. This essay will just impart some factors for guidance in de-coding the visual "text" that is Buddhist art, which, wonderfully, offers us a vision into the time, place, and makers of the art reflected through the lens of a Buddhist aesthetic.

INDIA

From the early centuries following the Buddha's *parinirvāṇa*, particularly from the time of the great King Aśoka (ca. 250 BCE), the remains of Buddhist art other than site foundations

consist primarily of monolithic stone pillars and *stūpa*s (reliquary monuments), many with sculptural adornments. The pillars were erected, probably mostly by King Aśoka, at sites relevant to Buddha's life and are meaningful as literally expressing the symbolism of the "axis mundi" (the world [cosmic] axis) connecting the material and spiritual worlds – a pervasive and powerful ancient Indian concept. More than a dozen of these majestic pillars still survive in part, some bearing inscriptions. Most were originally topped by a lotus capital (the lotus being the symbol of transcendent purity appearing in the imperfect world) supporting a sculpture, such as a lion, four back-to-back lions, a bull, or an elephant. These animals may evoke some qualities of the Buddha: perhaps Śākyamuni as the "lion of the Śākya clan," or suggest his "lion's roar of the Dharma." No known figures of the Buddha in human form now exist from this early period, although some texts mention a sculpture in Buddha's likeness made by King Udāyana and another by King Prasenajit, who were ardent patrons of the Buddha and his Saṃgha. Copies of the image known as the "King Udāyana Buddha" still survive in East Asia.

The Great Stūpa at Sanchi

The stūpa is an essential and lasting monument of Buddhism. The original eight stūpas were made to hold the relics (*śarīra*) of the Buddha after his *parinirvāṇa*. The stūpa was thus equated with the Buddha's body and his *parinirvāṇa* and, by extension, with his awakening. The Great Stūpa at Sanchi (Sāñcī) in Central India (Fig. 15.1) may have been one of the stūpas made by King Aśoka after he opened the original eight stūpas and distributed the relics into 84,000 stūpas. It was enlarged to its present size with four gates in ca. 150–50 BCE. To this day it continues to impart a strong and peaceful aura.

Figure 15.1   Great Stūpa at Sanchi, near Vidisha, Central India, 150–50 BCE.

The basic structure is that of a tumulus with a solid, hemispherical dome penetrated by the "axis mundi" holding a series of three circular "umbrella" plates above. A square railing (*harmika*) defines the sacred space surrounding the axis mast and plates as they meet the transcendent world above. The dome, finished with dressed stones (some still surviving), was covered with a white lime plaster of ground-up sea shells that would have gleamed in the sunlight. The circular base and the circumambulatory path – the way of venerating the stūpa by walking around it with the right side facing the stūpa (a clockwise direction following the path of the sun from east to west) – are bounded by an eleven-foot stone railing of octagonal pillars and lens-shaped crossbars that effectively demarcate the sacred space of the entire stūpa. A second circumambulatory path 16 feet above ground level is approached by a double stairway (Fig. 15.1). Four large gates (*torana*), one at each of the four cardinal directions, dignify the four entrances, which signify universal access and openness to all without restriction.

A rich array of high-relief sculptures adorns every surface of the four gateways. They include meaningful decorative motifs like the lotus pond with pairs of ducks, the *triratna* symbol of the Three Jewels, figures of male *yakṣas* (protectors) and auspicious female *yakṣis*. Many panels show scenes of events of the Buddha's life using symbols of his presence, such as his footprints, the bodhi tree for his awakening, the wheel lifted on a pillar for his teaching (Fig. 15.1), and the stūpa for his *parinirvāṇa*. These sculptures, carved with a fullness of form and sense of vibrant life, provide a welcoming spirit and heighten the joyous atmosphere that infuses this rare site.

The fundamental form and meaning of the Buddhist stūpa was established early in India and remained basically the same in later periods and other regions, despite added or expanded meanings, different subjects of embellishment, and changes adopted in accord with the culture where they were made, such as the storied tower type of stūpa (pagoda) of East Asia. From this early period in India the stūpa was taken as the main object of worship at Buddhist monasteries. In addition to the stūpas that loom large as a primary structure at a monastery, a stūpa also appears in smaller size as the main image of worship inside the rock-cut *caitya* assembly halls in the Buddhist cave temples of Western India by the early second century BCE.

Standing Buddha from Gandhara

Around the first century CE a new movement known as the Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle) began to develop and take root as distinct from the earlier Buddhism (usually called Hīnayāna or mainstream Buddhism; see Karen Lang's chapter in this volume). It was stimulated by the emergence of the early Mahāyāna sūtras, such as the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras* (*Perfection of Wisdom Discourses*) and the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*), and by such great thinkers as Nāgārjuna (ca. second to third century) and Asaṅga (ca. fourth century). This momentous movement engendered a profound shift towards the path of compassion (the bodhisattva path) for all beings and the perfection of wisdom in the teaching of *śūnyatā* (emptiness). The goal shifted from self-liberation from *saṃsāra* (cyclic existence) to the attainment of complete perfect awakening (*anutara samyak sambodhi*) as a buddha for the sake of awakening all beings. The rise of Mahāyāna is known as the second turning of the wheel of the Dharma, and its impact was profound.

The image of the Buddha was formulated during this complex and invigorating period of change, ca. first century CE. The model for the depiction of the Buddha in the Gandhara area

(present-day Pakistan and Afghanistan) was influenced not only by the centuries-old heritage of Greek art, but also by the contemporary art of the Roman empire, which now readily reached the Gandhara region through the international overland trade routes. In Gandharan art the Buddha is generally depicted as a powerful figure of herculean proportions and muscular body of the Greco-Roman paradigm of the West (Fig. 15.2). The Buddha image of the Mathura area of Central India, on the other hand, reveals the indigenous tradition of the *yakṣa* portrayal – also a powerful figure, but with the depiction of the yogic inner powers rather than the muscular outer form. Both types are garbed in the robes of a monk, but they are differently presented. In the Gandharan sculpture in Figure 15.2 the hem of the outer robe (*saṅghāṭī*) is held in his left hand and the thick cloth is pulled over the left shoulder, around the back and across the front of the body with the end flung back over the left shoulder.
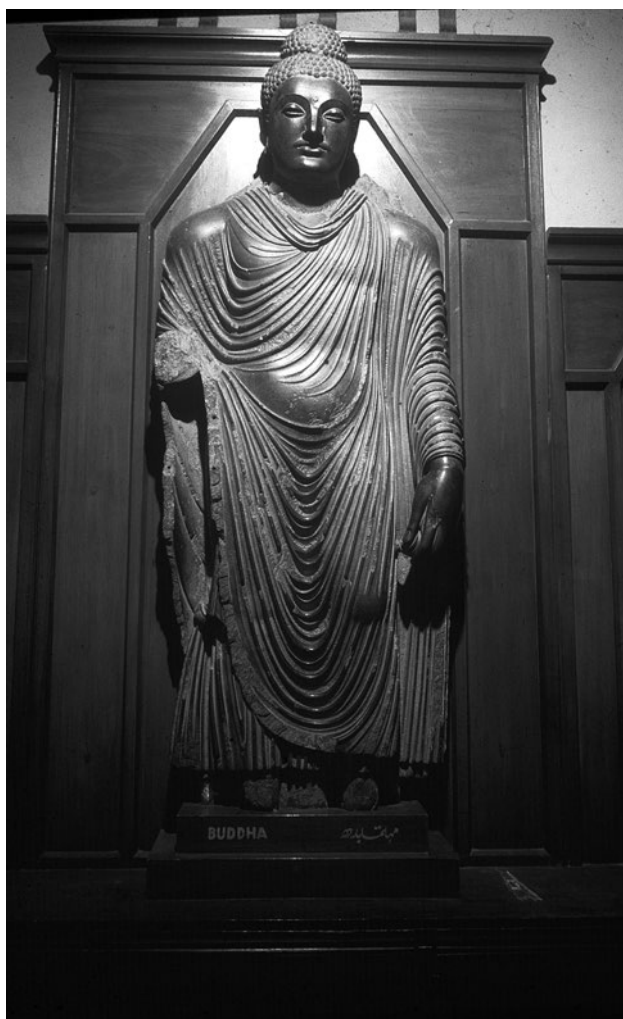
Figure 15.2   Standing Buddha, from Takht-i-bahi, Gandhāra, near Peshawar, Pakistan, black schist, ca. third century CE, H. 7½ ft., Lahore Museum.

The folds of the robe form a pattern of parallel, rounded "rib" folds alternating with sharp creases. The overall pattern is asymmetrical across the chest but symmetrical over the lower body. Mathura sculptures at first portrayed the Buddha image as wearing a thin, light, delicate *saṅghāṭī* – usually shown covering only one shoulder. Folds are mostly incised lines and compactly grouped raised strips. Over time, however, this style changed into patterning similar to the Gandharan type. By the third century a distinctive style of Buddha image had also emerged in the South and spread to Sri Lanka.

The Buddha sculpture in Figure 15.2 shows several of the Buddha's thirty-two special "marks" (*lakṣaṇa*), such as the cranial protuberance (*uṣṇīṣa*) and the curl of gleaming white hair between the eyebrows (*ūrṇā*). The long earlobes, frequently seen in Buddha images, refer to his life as a prince when he wore heavy earrings that distended his earlobes, but they are not a *lakṣaṇa*. Buddha's hair, described as curling from right to left, is frequently shown as tight curls covering the cranium and *uṣṇīṣa*. This over-life-size Buddha statue has realistically portrayed features and his gaze looks downward toward the viewer below. It came from the monastery of Takht-i-Bahi (near Peshawar) and was part of a large array of monumental image niches surrounding the court of votive (offering) stūpas. Overall, the Gandharan model became one of the most powerful and influential interpretations of the Buddha to emerge during the long history of Buddhist images up to the present, rivaled only by the Indian Sarnath style with unlined robe and idealized body that appeared in the Gupta period (ca. fourth to sixth centuries). Both styles continued thereafter, but were also combined into variant modes, especially during the flowering of Buddhist art under the Palas and Senas in Magadha, the land of the Buddha Śākyamuni's teaching, from the eighth through twelfth centuries when great Buddhist monastic universities prospered with studies of Mahāyāna and Tantric Mahāyāna (Vajrayāna or Mantayāna), the esoteric teaching of the Dharma, whose profound methods of practice continued in later centuries in Tibet.

CHINA

In the first to third centuries CE Buddhism and its art began to spread from India, especially from Gandhara and Kashmir, into Central Asia and China via the trade routes (the Silk Roads), beginning a journey with consequential ramifications for China, which rapidly became a great Mahāyāna Buddhist country where Buddhism rivaled the ancient traditions of Confucianism and Daoism (see the chapters by Pacey in this volume). This major movement of Buddhism to China virtually assured the ascendency of the Mahāyāna form of Buddhism thereafter in all of East Asia.

The earliest Buddhist art survives from around the second half of the second century during the late Han dynasty. From the fall of the Han in 220 CE until the conquest of North China by the Northern Wei in 439, through times of great turmoil, warfare and political instability in China, Buddhism continued to develop, and many important achievements were accomplished in the translations of sūtras and in the production of Buddhist art throughout China, including the beginnings of many of the famous Buddhist cave temples of China.

The Five Tanyao caves at Yungang

Among the developments of the early foundations of Buddhism and its art in China, an important new aspect of Mahāyāna appears to reach China by the middle of the fifth century:

an early form of esoteric Mahāyāna, the so-called third turning of the wheel of the Dharma. Though concrete evidences for the rise of esoteric Mahāyāna are obscure and controversial, an early form can be apprehended in one of the grandest and most astonishing Buddhist monuments in China: the group of five colossal image caves, known as the "five Tanyao caves" Tanyao wuku 曇曜五窟 carved during the 460s and 470s at the site of Yungang near Datong in northeastern China. Following the devastating persecution of Buddhism under the Northern Wei dynasty from 444 to 452, the leading monk Tanyao 曇曜 (ca. mid-fifth century) petitioned the new emperor to carve out five caves, each with a colossal image, in the mountain cliff of the Wuzhou Pass west of the capital. The background history is complex, but very likely the enormous project was an atonement for the horrendous persecution.

   These five caves, numbered as Caves 16–20, are closely aligned side by side from east to west in the cliff. Except for the image of the cross-ankled bodhisattva in Cave 17 – who is certainly Maitreya Bodhisattva (the Future Buddha, now teaching in Tuṣita Heaven) – the identities of the four buddhas have been unresolved, although there is general agreement among scholars that the standing Buddha of Cave 18 (Fig. 15.3), whose robe shows the emanation of many transformation buddhas, is likely to be the cosmic, mystical buddha Vairocana of the *Flower Garland Discourse* (Skt. *Avataṃsaka-sūtra*; Ch. *Huayan jing* 華嚴經).
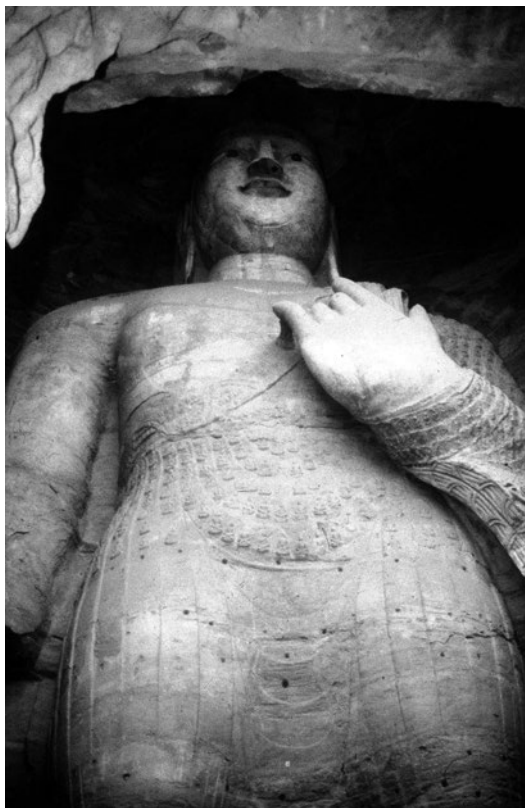
Figure 15.3   Standing Colossal Buddha, Cave 18, Tanyao caves, Yungang, Shanxi, China, 460s CE, Northern Wei dynasty, sandstone, H. 60 ft.

Some also link the five images to the chronology of the five Northern Wei emperors. The most recent identification of the main images (Rhie 2010: 467–480) is based on the development of sets of five buddhas in Gandhara and in China, as well as on certain sūtras translated into Chinese by the mid-fifth century. In brief, this theory unfolds as follows:

1   Cave 18: the colossal buddha is Vairocana, "cosmic" buddha of the *dharmakāya* (truth body) according to the *Flower Garland Discourse* translated in 420 by Buddhabhadra (359–429). It is the center of the group of five (Fig. 15.4).

2   Cave 16: the colossal buddha is Akṣobhya, "cosmic" buddha whose pure land (buddhafield; *buddha-kṣetra*) is Abhirati in the East. The *Akṣobhya Discourse*, the *Achufojing* 阿閦佛經 (no Sanskrit version survives), translated by Lokakṣema between 147 and 186, does not mention any specific great bodhisattvas by name. Cave 16 is literally located in the east of the group of five Tanyao caves (Fig. 15.4) and the standing Buddha of Cave 16 is – among the five – uniquely alone without any attendants.

3   Cave 20: the colossal buddha is Amitāyus (Amitābha) of the various pure land sūtras of Amitābha/Amitāyus (first translations began as early as the mid-second century CE in China; see the chapter by Jones in this volume), whose pure land (Sukhāvatī) is in the West, and who has the two great bodhisattvas: Avalokiteśvara (Guanyin 觀音) and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (Dashizhi 大勢至). Cave 20 is at the west of the group of five, and the colossal buddha has two attendant bodhisattvas (largely ruined). Furthermore, the buddha is seated in the *dhyāna mudrā* (meditation gesture), which is definitively used for Amitāyus in China by 420/424 as known from the Amitāyus inscription in Cave 169 at Binglingsi.

At this juncture we can recognize that the buddhas of Cave 16 and Cave 20 at the east and west locations respectively are two of the four buddhas of the cardinal directions known in the *Golden Light Discourse* (Skt. *Suvarṇa-prabhāsottama-sūtra* Ch. *Jin guanming jing* 金光明經) translated by Dharmakṣema (d. 433) in Liangzhou (present Gansu; Tanyao is also from Liangzhou) and specifically identified as follows: East is Akṣobhya; South is Ratnaketu; West is Amitāyus; and North is Wei-miao-sheng (Sanskrit unknown). In the case of the five Tanyao caves, these four-direction buddhas, which include Akṣobhya (Cave 16) and Amitāyus (Cave 20), can be incorporated at the cardinal directions around a center (Cave 18). Precedents for this arrangement appear in the sculptures on Gandhara stūpas and in China by the mid-fifth century. They show a configuration of five with one in the center, thus indicating the usage in art of a spatial arrangement indicative of the concept of a center and four quarters.

4   Cave 19: the colossal buddha is therefore postulated as Ratnaketu, Buddha of the South, as known from the *Golden Light Discourse*. (It can be noted that from the eighth century in China, Ratnaketu becomes Ratnasambhava of the fully developed esoteric Mahāyāna maṇḍala of five buddhas.)

5   Cave 17: the colossal cross-ankled bodhisattva is Maitreya in Tuṣita Heaven and is in the North. In addition to the well-known "Maitreya sūtras" translated by the early fifth century in China, Maitreya is also prophesied as the fifth buddha of the thousand buddhas of this *bhadrakalpa* (our present "auspicious" eon). This designation appears in texts such as the *Buddha Chronicles* (*Buddhavaṃsa*, a Hīnayāna Pāli text with some later additions probably from ca. early fifth century) and the *Discourse on the Fortunate Eon* (*Bhadrakalpika-sūtra*, translated by Dharkamrakṣa in 291 or 300 CE), which was popular in China.
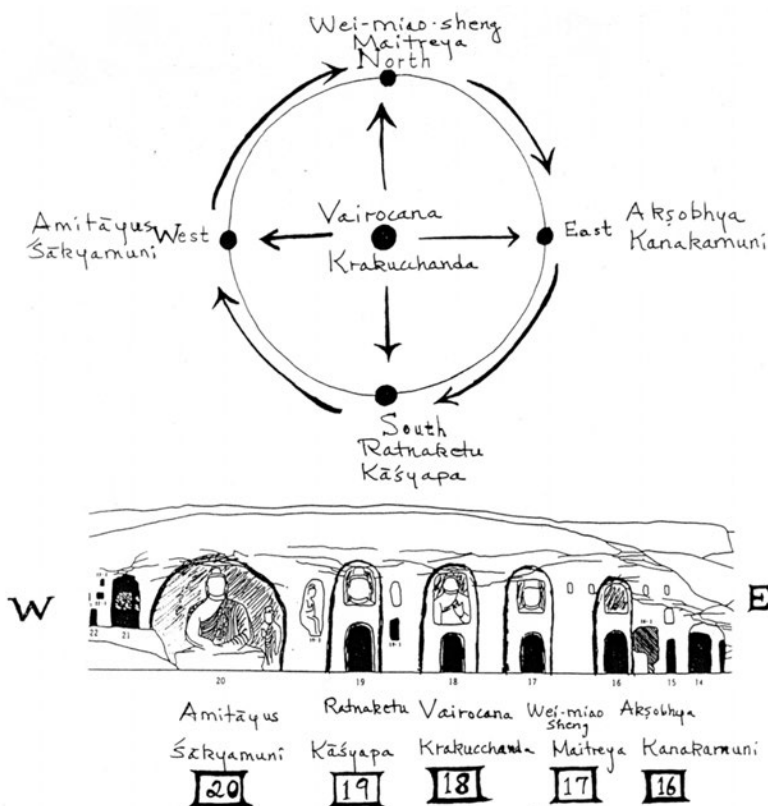
Figure 15.4   Diagram and elevation concerning the identity and layout of the five Tanyao caves at Yungang.

Because Maitreya Bodhisattva appears among the five Tanyao caves, these caves must also be related to the "earthly" (*mānuṣi*) buddhas (i.e., buddhas born into our world), the first five of whom in this fortunate eon are: Krakucchanda, Kanakmuni, Kāśyapa, Śākyamuni, and Maitreya. When the identity of the images of the Tanyao caves follows the plan of the center plus the four cardinal directions, which is a maṇḍala principle, then the order of circumambulation from the center to the periphery is East, South, West, and North (Fig. 15.4) – the order as stated in the *Golden Light Discourse*. In this scheme, Maitreya in Cave 17 is equated with the North direction and would be the last image in the circumambulation order of the spatial, maṇḍala construction. Finally, using this same order, the four earthly buddhas can be included as noted in the diagram of Fig. 15.4.

   This deciphering of the identities of the five individual colossal images of the Tanyao caves of Yungang incorporates various texts known in China, notably the *Flower Garland Discourse*, *Akṣobhya Discourse*, *Array of the Pure Land* (*Sukhāvatī-vyūha*), *Golden Light Discourse*, and the *Fortunate Eon* sūtras. As a set of five they are combined in a scheme incorporating both the cosmic (*dhyāni*) buddhas and the earthly buddhas of the *bhadrakalpa*. The overriding principle of organization as a maṇḍala spatial construct allows for such an identification. Though there remain more details to consider, such a construct is probably associable with the newly evolving ideas of esoteric Mahāyāna. Some of the essential

components of an esoteric Mahāyāna maṇḍala are supported, although not as fully evolved as the Tantric Mahāyāna maṇḍala forms of the eight–ninth centuries and later. This spectacular set of five colossal stone carved images from the mid-fifth century appears to be a surviving early prototype that testifies to the rudiments of the esoteric form of Mahāyāna thought and practice evolving in India around the fourth to fifth centuries.

By the early fifth century, individual colossal buddha images were already certainly known in Kizil (Central Asia) and Liangzhou (Gansu in northwest China), and the colossal Maitreya Bodhisattva of Darel (northern Pakistan) was already famous. But a set of five is unprecedented in Asia and known only with these five Tanyao caves at Yungang, even up to the present day. The immense power and awe-inspiring effects of these five colossal images become magnified exponentially when the four buddha-fields and Maitreya in the Tuṣita Heaven are taken together as a related, single maṇḍala group in this profoundly extraordinary set of five colossal images.

The most flourishing period for Buddhist art in China was during the Tang Dynasty (618–906), when China was the center of the East Asian world. Movements begun earlier in Chinese Buddhism, such as Huayan, Pure Land, and Chan, reached even greater heights in the Tang, and Chinese Buddhist art followed this impetus. Imperial sponsorship at the Longmen stone caves near Luoyang produced the enormous cave (Cave 19) of Vairocana of the Huayan 華嚴 tradition. In the far northwestern borders of China at the Dunhuang oasis the caves of the "Thousand Buddhas" are resplendent with the visions of Amitābha's Western Pure Land, a particularly favored subject during the seventh and eighth centuries. Related to this movement is the ever-rising popularity of Guanyin (Avalokiteśvara), a great bodhisattva of that pure land, who, over time, came to be the most beloved of all bodhisattvas to the Chinese.

Chan Buddhist Painting: Muqi

The art of the Chan 禪 (Jpn. Zen) form of Buddhism, which had developed into a major tradition in the Tang period, reaches its highest peak in the thirteenth century during the late Song period. A totally different Buddhist artistic expression occurs in Chan art, stemming from the Chan approach and practice in clearing away conceptuality and aiming straight for one's original buddha nature (see the chapter by Duckworth in this volume). Still rooted in texts like the *prajñā* (wisdom) *sūtras*, practice is focused on meditation and the use of the "*gong'an*" 公案 (Jpn. *kōan*) teaching in some cases. In the paintings of the two greatest Chan painters of China, Liang Kai 梁楷 (ca. 1140–1210) and the monk Muqi 牧溪 (ca. 1210–1269), the brushwork itself has become an expression of the Buddhist Dharma. No buddha image is needed. This entails ability by the viewer to understand the most subtle capabilities of the Chinese brush and ink technique and to realize that the execution and resultant visual form do not allow for any definition or any pinning down to being something with its own solid basis, its own "true" form, its own sense of "real" self-existence. The execution and the form have no basis, and no basis can be found – and that hits directly at the Buddhist wisdom of "emptiness" (*śūnyatā*).

The unsurpassed result (or no-result) at achieving (or not-achieving) this appears in Muqi's "Six Persimmons" (Liu shitu 六柿圖; Fig. 15.5). We see six "fruit" in shades of black ink on paper – a far different subject and mode of execution than the usual "iconic" images of buddhas or bodhisattvas. At first this painting seems very simple and easy to understand, although we may not understand why it is Buddhist. But look again. Can you
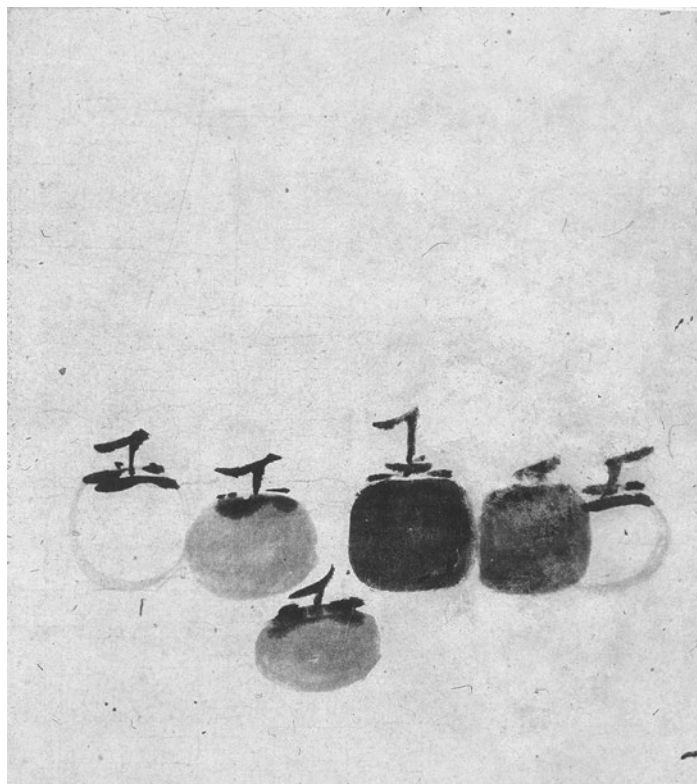
Figure 15.5   "Six Persimmons," by Muqi 牧溪, mid-thirteenth century, Southern Song Dynasty,
ink on paper, 35.1 × 29.0 cm, Ryōkō-in, Daitokuji, Kyoto.

be sure we are seeing persimmons? Maybe they are tomatoes – can you really be convinced
they are not tomatoes? Or something else? Then there are six of them, set out in a row of
five above and one below. There is not a single clue as to a setting or location or time. We
can only ask, "Why six? And why is one out of the row of five and sitting below and in
front? That one destroys the set of six, so it becomes a set of five plus one. One and five are
odd numbers; six is an even number; both odd and even are there, and each does not seem
to preclude the other. So there is no settling in on one or the other. Now look at the ink itself
– for example, its tonality (light and dark). Each object is individually different but also not
different. Some are dark, some are medium tone, some are light – almost like the white of
the paper. Also, some are more circular, some more square. We can look at this rationally
and try to see if maybe there is some symbolic meaning in all of this – otherwise we just
seem to be going around in circles without getting anywhere.

Let's take the darkest one. Maybe this is representing the stupid one with dense beclouded
mind and far from awakening, and those of lightest tone are the clearest of mind – that is, the
closest to awakening. Or, maybe we can consider the reverse: the lightest ones are empty-
headed and vacuous without any clue, while the dark one is full of deep understanding.
There is no way we can choose which way *might* be "right," much less which one *is* right.
Maybe none, maybe all – who knows? Even the investigation of circular versus square shape
cannot yield any certainty, definition, meaning, or intent. Nor does an analysis of whether or

not the objects are merely brush strokes yield any result. In the end we stop trying to figure out this very simple painting that certainly we might think we could even manage to paint with a little practice. But just try it and see if you succeed. With respect to Muqi's "Six Persimmons," we are simply left with what we see. The painting is only what it is and cannot be dissected, understood rationally, or defined. As much as we might try to pin it down in any way, we cannot. It is just as it is and we can only relate to that, though we may not know – and cannot "know" what "that" is or is not. We neither know, nor don't know what it is. The six "persimmons" are there for us to see them just as they are without any concept. This leads to emptying the mind. This painting becomes an offering of the Chan way of Buddhist practice and is one of the great contributions of China to Buddhist art.

KOREA

Korea and Japan in many ways are the inheritors of much of Chinese Buddhism and its art. Nevertheless, totally fresh and new interpretations spring from within their distinct cultures. During the fourth century CE Buddhism was introduced individually to the Three Kingdoms of the Korean Peninsula: Koguryŏ in the north, Paekche in the southwest, and Silla in the southeast. Silla unified the peninsula in 667 and established Buddhism as the national religion of Unified Silla (667–918). Within the locale of the capital at Kyŏngju many Buddhist temples and pagodas were built, and some still remain as a testimony to the depth of religious devotion of that time.

Sŏkkuram

In the mid-eighth century a supreme artistic expression of Buddhist art was made on Mt. T'oham, east of the capital facing the Eastern Sea. This is Sŏkkuram (Seokguram), a structurally made "cave temple" that was aligned with the rocky island tomb of King Munmu (r. 661–681), the Silla ruler who unified the nation. In 684 the Kamun-sa temple was constructed by the king's son with a special stone-chambered basement with water that connected to the river and the sea so that the "dragon" of King Munmu could come from its tomb up the river and enter the temple to hear the Dharma. Later, on the back (west side) of Mt. T'oham and in line with the other monuments, the national monastery of Pulguk-sa (Bulguk-sa) was built at the same time as Sŏkkuram in the mid-eighth century. Both were begun by Kim Taesŏng, a minister of Unified Silla, and both were apparently completed as a national project after Kim Taesŏng's death in 774. The resultant axial alignment of four sacred sites that evolved over a century – King Munmu's tomb in the sea, the Kamun-sa temple, Sŏkkuram, and Pulguk-sa – was possibly intended to produce powerful spiritual forces to protect the Buddhist nation.

Related to these events, during the reign of King Munmu, the Buddhist monk Uisang (Eusang, 625–702) made the difficult journey to China where he studied Huayan with Zhiyan 智儼 (602–68), the second patriarch of the Huayan sect. After Uisang hurriedly returned to Korea in 671 to inform King Munmu of the impending invasions by Tang China, the grateful king supported Uisang's introduction of Hwaŏm (Huayan) to Korea. From this beginning under Uisang's guidance, Hwaŏm grew to become the premier theoretical Buddhist teaching in Korea up to this day. It is likely that Uisang's disciples were instrumental in the design of Sŏkkuram. Indeed, complex religious meanings clearly underlie the identity of the Sŏkkuram imagery as well as the entire program and underlying

meaning of the cave (Hwang 1989; Kang 2005). These are not known definitely from surviving records, but can, to a certain degree, be surmised through an understanding of the Buddhist factors involved and through interpreting the images themselves, which contain in visual form all the intentions of the makers.

Sŏkkuram is a uniquely constructed cave temple fashioned of cut blocks of granite covered by earth to simulate the cave temples as known in India, Central Asia, and China. Interestingly, it is also a manner of construction known in Koguryŏ tombs of the Three Kingdoms period from the fourth to mid-seventh centuries. In the entrance hall (antechamber) of Sŏkkuram are stone carved relief panels of the eight "spirit deities" who are supporters and protectors of Buddhism and are named in many sūtras. These line the side walls, four on each side. The short passage leading to the main chamber is defended by two fierce, muscular guardians, and on the walls of the passage itself are superb reliefs of the Four Heavenly Kings of the Four Quarters. Known from early times in India, these four kings became particularly prominent throughout East Asia from the seventh century. The *Golden Light Discourse*, which devotes a major chapter to them and their vows to protect Buddhism, the Buddhist kings, and Buddhist countries, was important in Korea at this time. They are afforded a prime position in Sŏkkuram and are perhaps the most elegantly portrayed examples in Asian art – beautifully attired and decorated in delicately fashioned military garb enhanced by drifting scarves. They hold their weapons lightly as they confidently trample and control the demonic *yakṣas*.

The rotunda main hall with the seated Buddha on a high lotus pedestal appears to the viewer even from the antechamber, but before entering the main hall itself there is another factor to be noticed. It is a stone gate represented as a pair of octagonal pillars and a cross bar. This feature does not seem to be known in other Buddhist temples in East Asia. Its nearest comparable examples are the *torana* gateways of early India, such as seen at Sanchi (Fig. 15.1), and the pillars at the entrance to the main chamber of the famous Tomb of the Twin Pillars in North Korea (Koguryŏ) of the sixth century. At Sanchi the *torana*s mark the entrances into the sacred realm of the stūpa. In the Twin Pillars tomb, the massive octagonal pillars denote the passage of the deceased into the after-life – an ancient concept also known in China. As one passes into the rotunda at Sŏkkuram, the apparent indication, both from a Buddhist viewpoint and from a secular cultural tradition connected with burial, is that of a gate into a sacred and other-worldly space of rebirth. Since we can see the Buddha and the full shape of the rotunda space at this point, we know where we are going when we decide to pass through the gate, although we cannot yet see all the images carved in panels around the circular walls.

Positioned slightly towards the back of the thirty-foot high rotunda, the Buddha (h. 10' 8") is lifted up on a 5' 2" high lotus pedestal (Fig. 15.6). The halo appears on the back wall. The Buddha is above the viewer, yet close. His face looks downward directly to the viewer with a slight smile and magnanimous, kindly expression. His body is broad with wide shoulders and strong limbs. The splendidly heroic form is revealed by the *saṅghāṭī*, which is worn leaving the right shoulder bare in a typically Indian mode. Both loose and tight, the robe pulls across the upper chest as though melding with the body, in some areas mysteriously without distinction between the body and the cloth. Over the arms and legs irregular pleats offer a mild sense of movement that imparts the quality of a living presence. The Buddha is immediately the riveting entity of the cave space – its center and its master.

In time, however, we may begin to wonder what buddha is this? There are many buddhas known in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Normally, the buddha with the *bhūmisparśa mudrā* (the

Figure 15.6   Seated Buddha, Sŏkkuram, Kyŏngju, Korea, Unified Silla, ca. mid-eighth
century, granite.

"earth-witness" gesture) is Śākyamuni, who made this gesture at the time of his awakening
at Bodhgaya. He placed the middle finger of his right hand to touch the earth, calling the
Earth Goddess to bear witness to his defeat of all illusion (*māra*). So the identity of the
Sŏkkuram buddha as Śākyamuni is feasible. However, in looking at the surrounding figures
in the cave, other possible options emerge. Since there is no early record that definitively
tells us the precise identity intended by the makers, we have to search for the identity and
the intention.

Analysis of the fifteen relief panels around the rotunda yields the following interesting
factors. These reliefs are arranged in two groups of seven panels that parallel each other on
both sides of the central axis of the hall. One different image appears on the central axis
itself, directly behind the buddha. As we stand in front of the buddha image, to our left
appear, in order, Brahmā, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, and four monk disciples; to our right
are Indra, Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, and four monk disciples. The first left–right pair of Brahmā
and Indra are high gods from antiquity in India who play a role in Śākyamuni's life and in
the sūtras where they are characterized as supporters and protectors of the Three Jewels and
represent the world of the gods. Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī are great bodhisattvas of the
Mahāyāna: the former as the epitome of the perfection of practice and the latter as the

bodhisattva of wisdom. As a pair they are the definitive bodhisattvas of the *Flower Garland Discourse* and bracket the beginning and end respectively of the path to awakening as described in the long *Gaṇḍhavyūha* (*Discourse of the Arrayed Tree*) chapter of that sūtra, the main buddha of which is Vairocana, the transcendent, cosmic buddha of the truth body (*dharma-kāya*). In this sūtra, Śākyamuni and Vairocana are also understood as being synonymous. The presence of Samantabhadra and Mañjuśrī in the rotunda strongly suggests that the buddha is Vairocana (or Vairocana/Śākyamuni). The *bhūmisparśa mudrā* is not typical for Vairocana, but it is for Śākyamuni. The ten disciples are thought to be the great disciples (*arhat*) of Śākyamuni Buddha and represent the highest attainment (nirvana) of the early (Hīnayāna) form of Buddhism. Although their presence supports the identity of the Buddha as Śākyamuni, the great arhats are important in Mahāyāna as well.

The figure that occupies the intersection of the two halves of the rotunda along the central axis and directly behind the buddha is extraordinary and totally unexpected. It is not fully visible until one passes around behind the buddha (Fig. 15.6). It is a standing figure of the Eleven-faced Kwanseŏm (Ekādaśamukha Avalokiteśvara) Bodhisattva (Fig. 15.7).

Avalokiteśvara is the bodhisattva of great compassion and is usually associated with the Western Pure Land of Amitābha. However, by the seventh century some esoteric forms of Avalokiteśvara became known in East Asia, such as the eleven-faced form known in

Figure 15.7   Standing Eleven-faced Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva (Kwanseŏm Bosal), Sŏkkuram, Kyŏngju, Korea, Unified Silla, ca. mid-eighth century, granite.

Xuanzang's 玄奘 (602–64) translation (656 CE) of the *Dhāraṇī Heart Sutra of the Eleven-Faced Avalokiteśvara* (Skt. *Avalokiteśvara-ekadaśamukha-dhāraṇī*; Ch. *Foshuo shiyi mian Guanshiyin shenshou jing* 佛说十一面观世音神咒经). The presence of this image is startling and changes the character of the ensemble in a major way, implying not only the esoteric dimension of Mahāyāna, but also a link to Amitābha Buddha. While the *bhūmisparśa mudrā* of the Sŏkkuram buddha is not readily known in East Asian art for Vairocana or for Amitābha, it does occur in the great Amitābha Buddha sculpture of the Pusŏksa, the first Hwaŏm temple established by Uisang in Korea. It is the only image placed in the main hall and sits on an altar on the west side of the hall – the direction of the Amitābha Pure Land. Furthermore, Uisang's private worship is known to have centered on Avalokiteśvara. In light of these factors, it would seem that the buddha of Sŏkkuram could, with some pertinent reasons, be identified as three buddhas: Śākyamuni, Amitābha, and Vairocana. Certainly not all factors in the ensemble, as far as we are aware at present, support the usual identification of only one of these three.

The confluence of three possible identities for the buddha of Sŏkkuram presents a conundrum with respect to any specific identification of the image. It could perhaps be that all three buddhas are implied in this one buddha image. If all three were implied, they could easily represent in sum the three bodies of buddhas: the *nirmāṇa-kāya* (emanation body) as Śākyamuni, *saṃbhoga-kāya* (bliss body) as Amitābha, and *dharma-kāya* (truth body) as Vairocana. Another factor becomes clear with the presence of the esoteric form of Avalokiteśvara. It is only one image, but it is in the most powerful position – on the central axis directly behind the buddha – thus expressing the crucial role of compassion heightened and intensified by its eleven-faced esoteric form. In total, the main figures of the rotunda can present an arrangement suggesting the concept of *eka-yāna*: one vehicle, a concept that pervades Buddhism, although with variable combinations according to interpretation or source. In the case of Sŏkkuram we appear to witness images indicative of the three *yāna*s (vehicles): Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna as one vehicle, a distinct concept that may have been important to Uisang and his disciples. Since Uisang was a master of Hwaŏm, he certainly knew that Vairocana and Śākyamuni are the same. So his disciples may have extended this to make an *eka-yāna* by incorporating Uisang's personal belief in Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara, the latter also showing Uisang's known interest in esoteric *dhāraṇī*. Thus Buddhism is expressed not as three separate teachings, but all as one teaching of Buddha. It seems likely that underlying and connecting the array of individual, skillfully carved, beautifully rendered sculptures in this cave temple are profound truths of Buddhism visually presented as a unique expression of Korean Buddhism and as related to the great master Uisang.

JAPAN

From the time of the introduction of Buddhism to Japan from Korea in ca. the mid-sixth century to the thirteenth century in the Kamakura period, the Buddhist teachings and art were largely related to the court and aristocracy. However, in the later centuries the influence of the Amida (Amitābha) Pure Land and Zen (Chan) traditions spread widely into society, none more pervasive in cultural transformation than Zen. Zen art in Japan was carried to new and meaningful dimensions, such as the ritual of the tea ceremony, and literally into the landscape of Japan in the form of Zen gardens. Although seemingly secular in nature, these gardens are also a "living" Buddhist teaching and reflect important aspects of Buddhism and its practice.

Ryōanji Garden

One of the most famous of the Zen gardens is the "dry" landscape garden at the Ryōanji 竜安寺 in Kyoto of the late fifteenth century (Fig. 15.8). In its austere simplicity it attains a remarkable level of profound Buddhist content. The garden is an abstract, rectangular, level ground covered in white gravel with five groups of stones. It is enclosed and demarcated on two contiguous sides by a low, roofed, earthen wall and on the other two sides by temple buildings, one of which is a meditation hall whose sliding panel walls open to view the whole garden from a fixed position on the long side of the rectangle.

One may try to read some story or symbolism into the five islands of rocks in a sea of white stones, and that may get one started with trying to understand this garden. But it is a Zen meditation garden, and it is likely that the design in some way aids in the meditation practice of the monks and others who come to this monastery and view it from within the hall or from the raised plank floor under the eaves outside the sliding doors. So we are asked to see the garden as a unit from a static position, without moving into or around it, and the bounded space keeps our sight and mind focused there.

From the start, we are well aware of the level white gravel, which is radically different from our usual irregular ground surfaces and earth colors. The white gravel defines a completely abstract, pure white ground. In Japan, the raked white gravel ground is well known from the ancient and most sacred Shintō shrine in Japan: the inner shrine (*naikū* 内宮) of Ise Jingū 伊勢神宮 at Ise, founded in the late third century CE. This shrine of Japan's native religion holds the sacred mirror reflecting Truth and Justice. Only the Emperor and

Figure 15.8 Dry Landscape Garden, Ryōanji, Kyoto, Japan, late fifteenth century, Muromachi period.

chief Shintō priest are ever allowed into the inner area of this shrine. The white gravel is considered, by virtue of its usage as the ground of the Ise shrine, to represent a sacred, exorcised, purified space. The resonance of this in the Ryōanji meditation garden would certainly strike deeply the consciousness of anyone raised in the Japanese culture. In the Ryōanji garden, however, this pure ground supports five groups of natural rocks that destroy any likeness to a godly, constructed shrine. Rather, the relation of natural rocks and the abstract ground appears at first like the extremes of both the real and nonreal – a difficult contrast to fathom, to cope with, and to deny. At this juncture, the garden hits hard.

Then, stay with it and look more carefully. Out of this utter harshness, there appears some small, subtle relation between ground and rocks. The white gravel subtly and continuously generates a pervasive brilliance that suggests a three-dimensional space of light that envelopes the rocks above the flat ground level. Further, the white gravel, which is strictly raked in the longitudinal direction, modifies its straight path to go around each of the five rock islands. Each rock island is surrounded by a shallow bed of green moss that softens their setting and makes a transition zone of meeting, albeit a thin and fragile band, with the white gravel ground. Although not seen, the rocks themselves are buried deep in the ground (usually only about one third shows above ground). This achieves a hidden but important sense of relation with the ground and produces an immediately sensed stability and naturalness, as though the ground was built up around these rocks for centuries of time. The absolute harshness of the existence/nonexistence paradigm begins to modify and melt away.

When our attention turns specifically to the five groups of rocks we may first notice that though they appear well-ordered and organized, they are not ordered in the way humans instinctively crave; that is, with the balance and symmetry of duality that opposes chaos. In fact, these rocks deny symmetry in every way: in terms of number of groups (five), number of rocks within each group (odd number), in placement (irregular), and in the attributes of the individual rocks (different shapes, sizes, textures, and coloring). The asymmetry and irregularity seem natural – as though found in Nature and without the interference of conceptual manipulation. But the clear contrast to the artificial white gravel ground continues to fight the tendency toward seeing this garden as natural. It is both natural and unnatural. Nevertheless, we can still admit that at least the white gravel takes account of the rocky islands and their mossy edges by being raked around them, imitating their shape like cosmic gravity waves and acknowledging them at least at some level.

Once we seem to have apprehended the basic structure and rather indeterminate character of what still seems to be a well-organized whole, we perhaps then start looking more pointedly at each individual island and their rocks for more meaning (*upāya*) – perhaps even as referring to the "five *skandas*" (constituents of the psycho-physical continuums of beings; see "Buddhas and Buddhisms"). But the islands may be more elusive and not yield their purposes so easily. The islands vary in size and shape a little, but not enough for there to be a hierarchy, to become isolated, or to stand out from being included in the group of five. The rocks have some interesting shapes or perhaps a touch of some color, like white quartz, but again, not enough to dominate the overall garden where no one island stands out as dominant in terms of size, shape, color, and texture. So we cannot find a leader among the five groups. Nevertheless, each has a certain degree of interest that draws our eyes to stay with each island and yet to also move from one island to another. If we consider how our vision moves and how we consider each island, we may see that no matter where we begin, we tend to stay for a while looking at the interesting shapes, etc., but after a while,

irrevocably, our gaze moves on to another, adjacent island, as though searching for something. That is, we are interested enough to look at one island for a while, but eventually we move to another, then another, and so on. We keep going, from one to the other, around and around – like rebirth in *saṃsāra*.

We can also observe, however, that at some point there is an equal pull to remain with one individual island and at the same time to realize that it is part of the whole group of five. The rocks are so positioned that we always – in the corner of our eye – see the others, of which it is a part. After a while we cannot decide if each island is an independent entity or if it is dependent upon the whole. But in our rational world of the two-value logical mind, something cannot be both independent and dependent at the same time – that is a contradiction and cannot be true by logic. No definition can be established and ultimately the relationship cannot be defined. It eludes us according to our conceptual world, similar to the "Six Persimmons" of Muqi. Rather, what we seem to have in this garden is a mutual interdependence where there is no beginning and no end in time and space. The garden becomes like the illusory nature of *saṃsāra* being shown to us in all its actual lack of absoluteness, but somehow hinting at an absolute purity. Things appear only as a dependent arising determined by causes and conditions that destroy the absolutist/nihilist extremes. This garden gives us a glimpse of our world as taught by Buddha and as articulated and pointed to in the wisdom sūtras and writings and teachings of the Buddhist masters. It leads into cleansing the mind-field and purifying the mind of a self. Perhaps in the end, at Ryōanji, the focus on the garden dissipates and we become aware of the larger world outside and the open space above. And then, any place can be like this garden.

TIBET

Tibet began to inherit the Buddhism of India from the seventh century during the Yarlung Dynasty. After a setback in the dark period from the mid-ninth century to ca. 1075, Buddhism was revived and reintroduced (the so-called "second transmission") and thereafter grew vigorously and continuously to the present day (see the chapter by Stevenson in this volume). Tibetan Buddhism is a paramount repository of the direct Buddhist lineages from India, especially including the teachings and texts of esoteric Mahāyāna (Vajrayāna, Tantric Mahāyāna, Mantrayāna) which, over the course of the fifth to twelfth centuries, were developed by master teachers in the great Indian Buddhist monasteries of Nālandā, Vikramaśīla and others, and evolved through the practices of the Great Adepts (Mahāsiddha). The detailed rituals, instructions, and visualizations of deity yoga (*devatā-yoga*; Tib. *lha'i rnal 'byor*) that are fundamental to this form of Buddhist practice became amplified, sharpened, and maintained through centuries of study and practice in Tibet.

Tantric Mahāyāna includes teachings of the other two "yānas" (Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna) as a basis but has highly advanced, highly structured practices geared to concentrated visualizations capable of producing great merit and purification to achieve a more rapid acceleration to the goal of complete, perfect awakening. For example, practice with maṇḍala visualization attains purification through immersion in a specific buddha-field by "entering" the buddha-field (see the chapter by Jones in this volume). This is an advanced practice only for those bodhisattvas who are ready to enter the pure lands in preparation for complete, perfect awakening. These methods depend for their efficacy not only on a thorough understanding of Buddhism, but also on the guidance of knowledgeable teachers, especially one's main *guru*. Although this is true of all other Buddhist methods of training, the tantric

method teaches visualizations that are "archetype" contemplation deities (*yi dam*; Skt. *iṣṭa-devatā*). Such archetype deities are the buddhas and bodhisattvas in various emanations and forms. Most powerful and advanced are the primary father–mother (*yab yum*) manifestations according to the four tantras – the Guhyasamāja, Cakrasamvara, Hevajra, and Kālacakra tantras. In these images, the male represents method (compassion and skill in means), and the female represents wisdom. The union of the two is the reflex of the awakened.

Tibetan Buddhist art presents an enormous range of subjects in all areas of art, but here we will look at one example of a maṇḍala painting, which provides a glimpse of the vast forms of study and practice developed in esoteric, and especially Tantric, Mahāyāna. As represented in paintings, these images appear pristine, vivid in color, perfect in form and line. They are so condensed as to appear to be potent energies – like a neutron star emitting light from the awakened world to inspire, uplift, and aid the practitioner along the path to awakening. In Tibet all the great orders – Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, and Geluk (which incorporated the earlier Kadam) teach the esoteric Mahāyāna according to their lineage transmissions.

Guhyasamāja Maṇḍala

The tangka (Tibetan painting on cloth with mineral colors) in Fig. 15.9 is a maṇḍala of Guhyasamāja from the tantra of the same name, known as the "King of Tantras." It is the highest representative of the "Father" class of tantras. An inscription on the back informs us that this is a visualization tangka of Sakya Lama Khedzun Kunga Lekpa, who lived during the second half of the fourteenth century. He is also known as a teacher of Tsong Khapa (Tsong kha pa, 1357–1419), great luminary and founder of the Geluk Order, also the order of the Dalai Lamas. Such specificity accompanies much of Tibetan Buddhist art, as it was usually made with a definite purpose, in this case to aid in the personal visualization practice of this high Sakya lama.

In general, a maṇḍala painting is the two-dimensional representation of a buddha-field, revealed as a symbolic diagram of the whole field contained within protective circular rings. The palace of the buddha-field appears in the center surrounded by four square walls with an elaborate gateway in each of the four cardinal directions. This specific maṇḍala shows the *yab yum* couple of Akṣobhyavajra (six-armed, dark blue) and Sparśavajrā (six-armed, light blue) in the central and highest chamber of the innermost circular realm of the palace, which is divided into nine compartments. Nearby, at the four cardinal directions appear the attendant six-armed deities in bodhisattva form and in the directional colors. The female forms appear at the intermediate points. Other entourage deities appear in the corners of the square contiguous to the inner circle, and protector deities reside in the larger outer square and at the gates (Thurman 1997: 137–139; Brauen 2009).

In practice, after the appropriate rituals, the visualization begins with the appearance of a *viśva-vajra* (two crossed vajra "thunderbolts" representative of adamantine, great compassion) from which the maṇḍala palace arises. The points of the *viśva-vajra* appear in Fig. 15.9 emerging at the top of the four majestic multi-level, ornamented gateways at each of the four cardinal directions, and the vajra prongs project out from the mouths of *makara* (mythical water creature) making a great arch at the sides of each gate. In visualization, all structures appear in three dimensions in perfect architectural detail, completely ornamented and as though made of translucent jewel-like substances of incredible purity and brilliance. Entry can be directly to the highest, central position of the *yi dam* couple, but also through

Figure 15.9   Thirty-two Deity Guhyasamāja Maṇḍala, Central Tibet, late fourteenth century, tangka, mineral colors on sized cotton, 36 × 32¾" (91.4 × 83.2 cm), Zimmerman Family Collection.

the palace gateways. Enclosing the whole sacred realm are circular bands representing protective zones, including a band of lotuses, a narrow band of single vajras, and the outer surrounding band of cosmic flames of five different colors. Beyond this realm of the buddha-field in the dark cosmic space are numerous vine-encircled vignettes of Sakya lamas, protector gods, and auspicious symbols. Across the bottom are arrayed the "World Gods" (gods of wind, air, sun, moon, etc.) as protectors, and completing the tangka at the very top are the lineage siddhas and lamas of the Sakya Order. The perfection of the painting, the goal of all Tibetan tangkas, allows for a super-realism, an accurate template for visualization in the preparatory (creation) stages of a practice that leads into the ever more profound aspects of the completion (perfection) stages where one's own mind–body then becomes the actual sacred maṇḍala.

From this and the other examples presented here perhaps we can begin to apprehend something of the complex, deep, and virtually unlimited evolution of Śākyamuni Buddha's teachings, as embodied in visual forms of art that still remain and inspire us today. While we end with the maṇḍala in its fully developed practice form, we can be aware that the Great Stūpa at Sanchi is also a form of maṇḍala, as are the five colossal images of the Tanyao caves at Yungang, Muqi's "Six Persimmons," the cave of Sŏkkuram, and the garden of Ryōanji. All are fundamentally related, in differing ways, to the one goal of leading beings to awakening.

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DEATH AND AFTERLIFE

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Paul Hackett

INTRODUCTION

Beginning with the life story of the Buddha, the problem of death has figured prominently in the Buddhist tradition. In the narrative of his life, his first vision of a corpse proved instrumental in motivating him to pursue a religious path. Indeed, even a critical part of the Buddha's awakening concerns the truths of old age and death, which are presented as the culminating events of an existence characterized by craving, attachment, and suffering, and which even under the most ideal circumstances remains tinged by a subtle form of suffering. To lead a good life – a meaningful life – from a Buddhist perspective, then, one must not only understand and be reconciled with death, but must also take it into one's daily meditations.

All Buddhist traditions repeatedly speak of the problems of delusion and ignorance and the dangers of misapprehending the world around us. While there is an extensive body of literature on the philosophical implications of Buddhist ideas about how beings are bound to the endless cycle of cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*), even without contemplating subtle and profound questions of the nature of reality and the universe it is clear that most people fail to confront the immanence of death in their daily lives. To understand the significance and impact of Buddhist thought on how one lives, one must understand, in clear and sober terms, the Buddhist perspective on the encounter with death.

MINDFULNESS OF DEATH IN THE EARLY TRADITION

In a widely attested presentation of religious practice offered in the various traditions of Buddhism, progress along the religious path involves the "Three Trainings" of ethical conduct to calm the body, meditations to calm the mind, and cultivation of insight into the nature of reality. Prior to and even during the course of these practices, the problem of "obstacles" to the path – attachment to things such as the valorization of different courses of action, family, a stable dwelling, gain, etc. – must be dealt with. As an antidote to such obstacles, one general approach is mindfulness of death. This cognizance of death and being consistently mindful of it are thus deemed antidotes to the various normal unreflective states of mind that typify daily life. An aphoristic collection of verses entitled *Categorical Sayings* (*Udāna-varga*) advises:

In the morning one sees many people,
But in the evening some will not be seen;
In the evening we see many people,
But in the morning some will not be seen.

When many men and women
Die even at a young age,
When someone says, "this person is young,"
Why do they have such confidence that they will remain alive?

Some die when they are in the womb;
Some on the ground where they are born.
Some die just as they learn to crawl;
And some just as they learn to walk.

Some die old, and some die young,
Some in the very prime of life.
All people pass away in turn,
Just like the falling of ripened fruit.

<div align="right">(Udāna-varga I.7–10)</div>

While such contemplations are intended to motivate practitioners to pursue religious activities, most remain attached to their bodies and the momentary pleasures they afford. This is a major hindrance to proper meditation on the path to awakening.

The fourth-century scholar Buddhaghosa advised meditation on the foulness of the body as an antidote to attachment to it. In his *Path of Purification* (*Visuddhimagga*), he recommends reviewing in one's mind the repulsiveness of the body,

> up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair and contained in the skin, as full of many kinds of filth thus: In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone marrow, kidney, heart, liver, midriff, spleen, lungs, bowels, entrails, gorge, dung, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine.

It is this carcass, called "a body," he remarks, that "is a conglomeration of filth, because such vile things as the head hairs, etc., and the hundred diseases beginning with eye disease, have it as their origin" (Buddhaghosa 2010: 237).

As a specific training for those suffering from excessive desire, this form of analytical meditation may not prove sufficiently visceral. As a further exercise, one of the thirteen types of ascetic practices allowed by the Buddha – the practice known as a "charnel ground dweller's" meditation – was also recommended. Again, the *Path of Purification* provides the canonical description of the benefits of the practice of living in a charnel ground:

> He acquires mindfulness of death; he lives diligently; the sign of foulness is available; greed for sense desires is removed; he constantly sees the body's true nature; he has a great sense of urgency; he abandons vanity of health, etc.; he vanquishes fear and

dread; non-human beings respect and honour him; he lives in conformity with [the principles of] fewness of wishes, and so on.

> Even in sleep the dweller in a charnel ground shows naught
> Of negligence, for death is ever present to his thought;
> He may be sure there is no lust after sense pleasure preys
> Upon his mind, with many corpses present to his gaze.
>
> (Buddhaghosa 2010: 71)

Such practices are recommended in a number of Indian Buddhist texts, and some authors describe in minute detail the physical aspects of the process of decomposition, which is presented as a powerful antidote to desire. Recounted as early as the third century BCE in the life of the monk Upagupta, this meditation is described in the *Verses of the Elder Monks* (*Theragāthā*):

> I went to the cremation ground
> And saw a woman discarded,
> Left behind on the cremation ground,
> Food for maggots.
> See the diseased, impure, putrid body,
> Which once beguiled fools.
> Now it swells and festers.
>
> (Norman 1969–71: 393–94)

Karen Lang (2003: 87, quoting Brown 1988: 242) notes that that while

> "the sheer physicality of such stories bruises the modern sensibility." … In the Buddhist process of mental training, however, the focus does not remain fixed on the revulsion created by putrefying flesh [but rather] the gradual development of mental training starts by developing disenchantment with the body; and from that point, the training moves forward to developing disenchantment with the world of the senses.

In precisely such a manner, according to Buddhaghosa (2010: 83), a meditation of this sort does not just produce a sober and disenchanted attitude toward existence: when successfully cultivated, it results in achievement of the first of the meditative concentrations (*jhāna*; Skt. *dhyāna*), advanced levels of awareness that are integral to the Buddhist path to awakening in the Pāli tradition.

THE DEATH PROCESS AS MEDITATION

Although the idea of reincarnation is present from the very inception of the Buddhist tradition, a discussion of the specific details of the passage from lifetime to lifetime does not appear until the first millennium CE. The fourth-century author Vasubandhu presented the normative cosmogony of the objective and subjective Buddhist world of his day in his monumental *Treasury of Manifest Knowledge* (*Abhidharmakośa*). In his presentation of the life of an individual, Vasubandhu described four stages in the endless cycle of existence: birth, the period from birth to the moment of dying, death itself, and the intermediate state

between death and the next birth. According to Vasubandhu, after death a being enters the "intermediate state" (*antarābhava*; Tib. *bar do*), in which it has the general shape and form of its future life and can be seen by others in the intermediate state or by masters of advanced spiritual attainments. Finally, the intermediate state being, overcome by intense oedipal desire at the sight of its future parents having sex, is propelled into a new existence, at which point all the factors forming a new body coalesce, the intermediate state being "dies," and conception in the womb takes place.

With the emergence of "tantric" literature in last half of the first millennium, meditation on this process of death took on an even greater significance. Far more than a simple inspiration and motivation for ethical conduct and self-reflection, in tantric literature the death process itself became reframed as an occasion for meditative practice. Predicated on an amplified emphasis on the Mahāyāna motivation to take the life of Śākyamuni Buddha as an exemplar for practice – following the bodhisattva path – tantric works offered accelerated types of meditative practice involving manipulation of subtle bodily energies in order to affect changes in consciousness at a fundamental level.

Coincident with these tantric scriptures and commentaries, a corresponding presentation of human physiology was provided that laid out the details of a "subtle body" (*māyā-deha*; Tib. *sgyu lus*) consisting of energies, conduits, and a variety of things analogous to nerve clusters, described in the literature as winds, channels, and nodes and drops. Hence, when bodily sensations occur, in the context of tantric practice, they are envisioned as the result of "winds" (*prāṇa*; Tib. *rlung*) moving through bodily "channels" (*nāḍī*; Tib. *rtsa*), energizing various "drops" (*bindu*; Tib. *thig le*) that reside in "nodes" (*cakra*; Tib. *rtsa ʼkhor*) throughout the body.

The tantric Buddhist view of the death process is thus intertwined with the general Buddhist understanding of personal identity. Reaffirming the explicit refutation of the notion of a permanent self (*ātman*) or a soul, the tantric literature also asserted a theory of personal identity that was constituted by ever-changing parts. Hence in addition to the combination of five basic components (*skandha*; Tib. *phung po*) that constitute the "person" – a physical body, a continuum of consciousness, emotional dispositions, certain discriminatory faculties, and a variety of other factors making up the personality – the overlay of a subtle body became central to an understanding of physiology in meditation. Thus, at the time of death, just as these various components gradually cease to function and the composite of all the factors begins to disintegrate, there arise both objective and corresponding subjective experiences.

According to the literature associated with the tantric systems known as "unsurpassed yoga tantra" (*anuttara-yoga*; Tib. *bla na med kyi rgyud*), at the time of death, the physical body begins to break down on both a coarse and subtle level. Thus, for example, at the start of the death process, one's eyesight begins to fail and physical strength disappears. At the same time, one begins to hallucinate and perceive bluish mirage-like images. Following the loss of sight, the sense of one's own body diminishes, and feelings of pleasure and pain fade away. At the same time, one's bodily fluids diminish, the mouth becomes parched, and the sinuses dry. One's sense of hearing is slowly lost, and even the natural hum in the inner ear ceases and silence prevails. As a subjective sign of these events, bluish-gray clouds or puffs of smoke appear to the mind.

As this process continues, the basic functions of digestion cease and warmth disappears from the body, memories fade, and even one's closest friends and loved ones are forgotten. The breath becomes difficult and labored, and all sense of smell is lost. Images in the mind's

eye turn dark, and only sparks of light, like fireflies, are seen. Finally, all bodily functions cease. The body becomes still. Breathing stops. All sense of being embodied – taste, touch, and all physical awareness – ends. All the bodily energies – the "winds" – come to rest in the heart. Subjectively, one experiences the image of a flickering candle on the verge of going out.

Although in terms of conventional designations it is at this point that most people declare death to have occurred, such is not the case according to the Buddhist tradition, because consciousness remains active. The tantric tradition further describes the experiences that take place in the realm of the mind after physical processes have ceased but consciousness continues to function (Powers 2005).

As coarser levels of consciousness progressively dissolve, instinctual predispositions – desire, fear, and the like – fade away, and even more subtle subjective experiences occur. Descriptions of these processes are cryptic in the core esoteric texts, but the details are expanded in later Tibetan tradition. For example, Yang-jen-ga-way-lo-dro (1740–1827) states that at this point, "a white appearance of light dawns as an extreme clarity and utter vacuity, like the sky pervaded by the light of the rising night-time moon when the autumn sky is free of dust" (1971: 309; cf. Lati and Hopkins 1979: 42). These and other poetic metaphors are used to describe the increasingly subtle experiences that occur in the mind of the dying person. Thus, as more primal instincts fade away – suckling, anger, excitement, and so on – an increasingly reddish light appears, like a clear autumn sky filled with light from a setting sun. Eventually the last of these instinctual natures disappears, accompanied by a thick darkness that is at the same time vivid in its blackness. Throughout it all, the various nodes throughout the body "loosen" and their normally trapped energies travel towards the heart, where the consciousness is focused. Finally, as the last of these energy-winds enters the heart, the most subtle state of consciousness dawns and the mind of clear light (*prabhāsvara-citta*; Tib. *'od gsal sems*) manifests in its utterly pure state, devoid of all mundane concerns and distractions.

At this point, the tradition maintains, only the "clear light" of death – the subtlest level of consciousness – remains in the body during the final moments of life. At this time, under normal circumstances, the consciousness separates from the body and enters the intermediate state before taking rebirth in another body. For a yogi trained in the tantric systems of practice, this need not be the case, however. According to some Tibetan traditions, a yogi who has entered into deep meditation at this time may be able to direct the mind in such a way that he or she is able to achieve a state of awakening (*bodhi*; Tib. *byang chub*) instead of being propelled into a new life.

On an anecdotal level, the Tibetan tradition maintains that even if they are unable to attain the final goal of complete awakening, skilled meditators can remain in a state of meditative absorption for several days or longer, still technically "alive," having prolonged the last moments of consciousness through mental concentration. Adepts can acquire a new intermediate state body every seven days and use this time to perfect their training. This practice provides opportunities for rapid progress along the path, and some even emerge as buddhas. This can be extended for up to forty-nine days, after which one must exit the intermediate state and begin one's next existence.

In the developed Tibetan tantric system regarding death and practices associated with it, dying and the intermediate state are both rich in potential for spiritual progress and perilous in terms of interruption and susceptibility to interference. Beings in the intermediate state who are not advanced meditators apprehend the overwhelming experiences they face –

which assault every sense and their consciousnesses – as real, and they tend to react in negative ways. As a result, their afflicted consciousnesses may be propelled into lower realms of rebirth in which they suffer as a result of bad decisions during this interregnum period. At the end of the intermediate state, consciousness finally separates from the body, and only at this point does Buddhist tradition regard a being as dead.

THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF BUDDHISM AND DEATH

It is this special relationship between the Buddhist tradition and the contemplation and knowledge of the subtleties of the process of death that has led many cultures and communities to view the ritual dimension of death as the special prerogative of Buddhist priests and adepts. Indeed, some cultures consider rituals for the dead to be most efficacious when performed by a Buddhist monk – someone who has been purified by maintaining vows, along with practice of meditation and austerities. Although common in their general theme – ensuring a beneficial rebirth for the deceased – the particulars of each ritual tend to have more to do with cultural flavor and the aleatory factors of Buddhism's assimilation than with any normative Buddhist practice across cultures.

For example, even at the time of the Buddha's passing death rituals were present. The internment of the Buddha's body, its cremation, and the collection of the resulting bone fragments as relics constitute both the first death ritual in Buddhism and a recapitulation of an event deeply ingrained in Indian culture. There are reports of similar acts in the hagiographic literature of the Buddha's previous lives, and they reflect both practices that were apparently widespread at the time and new innovations developed by his followers to commemorate his passing. After he died, his followers constructed funerary monuments (stūpa) to house his relics, a practice that quickly expanded with the creation of reliquaries for his prominent disciples, and later for other important figures all over the Buddhist world. The practice of building such monuments continues today and is a distinctive feature of the establishment of Buddhism in a particular area all over the world.

In the traditional accounts of the Buddha's death, his followers are instructed to treat his body in the same manner as that of a world-ruling monarch (*cakravartin*). The body should be wrapped in multiple layers of cotton cloth, soaked in oil, and then cremated so that, like a lamp, it will leave no ash when burned. Nonetheless, some relics, such as bits of bone and teeth, remained. These became focal points of devotion for Buddhists in later centuries, and some relics purportedly left behind by the Buddha are enshrined in several places in Asia; some are publicly displayed at specified times of the year to provide merit-making opportunities for devout Buddhists. In Indian tradition, viewing (*darśana*) of holy objects has long been regarded as religiously beneficial, and this applies both to the physical persons of living adepts and to their remains after death. Before its cremation, the Buddha's body lay in state to provide opportunities for veneration for seven days; this allowed his monastic disciples and laypeople to accumulate merit.

According to Indian Buddhist literature, the relics that remained after cremation were not mere bone fragments: they are described as resembling small washed pearls of three different sizes. Subsequently enshrined in Kuśinagara, the Buddha's relics soon became an object of dispute, as seven Indian kings argued for possession of at least a portion of them. As a result, the original stūpa was opened, and eight portions of the relics were distributed to the eight major kingdoms, each of which then constructed its own stūpa. Although the

account depicts a peaceful resolution to a dispute over distribution of the Buddha's remains, the narrative of their history tells an expanded story in which they become both focal points of worship and objects of contention among political and religious factions. Within a few hundred years, the Buddhist emperor Aśoka (304–232 BCE) had those eight stūpa*s* opened; the relics were removed and reapportioned in numerous newly constructed stūpa*s* (the symbolic number 84,000 is given), scattered throughout his realm as a sign of his control of a vast area, his fulfillment of the expectations of a religious king, and as a source for accumulation of merit by his subjects.

Over the ensuing centuries, various stories have been promulgated of pilgrims who traveled to India, obtained relics, and then returned to their home countries, where the relics were enshrined and venerated. The Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–64 CE) reputedly brought more than 1,000 relics to China, and as recently as the early twentieth century some Tibetans claimed to have illicitly purchased relics from British soldiers who broke open stūpas in India. Thus, this first Buddhist ritual associated with death – the retrieval and enshrining of relics – derives not merely from respect; it is also associated with a desire to promulgate veneration of important figures and provide opportunities for amassing beneficial karma. This process imbued relics with a special power and associated them with the charisma of the original person to whom they are linked (often tenuously), and this charisma continued to function long after death.

The creation of the Buddha's relics was not an isolated act; it was repeated and re-enacted by later Buddhist traditions all over Asia, each of which developed distinctive rituals and architectural styles for reliquaries. In the process, this activity also established the precedent for distinguishing two types of death: the death of ordinary beings and the death of special individuals.

For a special being – one on the path to awakening (or someone perceived as such by a particular community) – death is an opportunity for practice, but also may be conceived as an occasion for merit-making that benefits other beings. In some cases, successful merit generation can occur even when the link between a relic and a holy person is incorrect, as in a popular Tibetan story of a pilgrim who traveled to India and who promised his mother before he left that he would bring back a relic for her. As he was returning, he realized that he had forgotten, and he later found a dog's tooth and gave it to her, saying that it was one of the Buddha's teeth. His mother venerated the tooth with the deep faith of someone devoted to the Buddha and his Dharma, and as a result she reaped great merit.

Buddhist monks and nuns serve an important function in this regard: they are "fields of merit" (*puṇya-kṣetra*). Owing to their successful maintenance of vows and pursuit of the religious life, others who give them gifts or venerate them have access to greater spiritual benefits than are possible by giving to or respecting ordinary people. Hence, the rituals performed on the death of a monk or nun take on a different quality from those conducted for laypeople. These rituals, performed over the course of forty-nine days, are designed to ritually purify any residual obstructions to a fortunate rebirth. They culminate in a final ritual on the forty-ninth day to sever any ties between the being and their former life. At the same time, such observances offer a form of merit accumulation and establish a karmic connection between the participants and the deceased in the hopes that they may meet again in a future lifetime, enabling students to continue to study with their spiritual masters or to propitiate great luminaries of their traditions. For ordinary beings, however, death rituals take on a very different tone.

The purpose of death rituals for non-virtuosos is to mitigate the effects of the deceased's karma that would otherwise lead to negative rebirths – as an animal, a ghost, or a being in one of the hells. In the "Chiggala Sutta" (*Sutta Nipāta* 56.48; Bhikku Bodhi 2000: 1872), the Buddha describes the chances of being reborn as a human by analogy with a yoke floating on the surface of an ocean:

> "Monks, suppose that this great earth were totally covered with water, and a man were to toss a yoke with a single hole there. A wind from the east would push it west, a wind from the west would push it east. A wind from the north would push it south, a wind from the south would push it north. And suppose a blind sea-turtle were there. It would come to the surface once every one hundred years. Now what do you think: would that blind sea-turtle, coming to the surface once every one hundred years, stick his neck into the yoke with a single hole?"
>
> "It would be a sheer coincidence, lord, that the blind sea-turtle, coming to the surface once every one hundred years, would stick his neck into the yoke with a single hole."
>
> "It's likewise a sheer coincidence that one obtains the human state."

Consequently, the tradition maintains, at the time of death, it is highly unlikely that an ordinary person, having died, will take rebirth as a human once more. Of all the possible realms of rebirth – heavenly realms, the human realm, the animal kingdom, the domain of ghosts, or the various hells – it is far more probable that a human being who has led an ordinary life, engaging in the wide range of good and bad actions that occur in the course of a non-renunciant lifestyle, will end up in one of the lower realms; even if they manage to be reborn in a heaven, after exhausting their store of merit that led to this birth, they will eventually take rebirth in the lower realms.

An example of the Buddhist conception of the situation of ordinary beings caught up in cyclic existence is a story in an apocryphal text concerning the mother of Maudgalyāyana, one of the Buddha's two main disciples, which is widely popular in East Asian Buddhist traditions. Before his ordination, according to the story, Maudgalyāyana was a businessman. Prior to a business trip, he instructed his mother to use some money he had left her to make offerings to Buddhist monks and other wandering mendicants. Being selfish, however, she ignored his advice and hid the money instead, and later lied to her son upon his return, assuring him that she had engaged in pious activities. Because her actions deprived sustenance to the monastic community and was compounded by the negative karma by lying about it, after her death she was reborn in the lowest of the hell realms. Maudgalyāyana later ordained as a monk and attained liberation as a "worthy one" (*arhat*). He was described by the Buddha as the most accomplished of his disciples in attainment of supernatural abilities. After his mother died, Maudgalyāyana used his clairvoyance to discern where she had been reborn, but was unable to locate her. He asked the Buddha where his mother had gone and was informed that she was suffering and undergoing unimaginable torments in the deepest hell.

Hoping to save his mother, Maudgalyāyana traveled to the various hell realms, but could not find her. Only through the assistance of the Buddha was he able to see his mother, but Maudgalyāyana could not rescue her from the tortures that were the result of her negative actions. Maudgalyāyana petitioned the Buddha for assistance and as a result all the beings from that hell realm were liberated, but his mother could only be reborn as a hungry ghost (*preta*) because her misdeeds were so severe. Hungry ghosts are beings with enormous stomachs and tiny throats who are constantly tormented by insatiable hunger and thirst as a

result of greed and avarice in past lives. Even when they find food or drink, it appears to them as disgusting substances such as pus or blood.

Upon seeing his former mother's pitiable condition, Maudgalyāyana attempted to feed her, but her own karma made it impossible. The Buddha informed him that living beings cannot make offerings to the dead. Denizens of the lower realms can only be released by the virtuous meditative power of monastics and the purity of their adherence to religious vows. Maudgalyāyana then applied himself to his practice and accumulated prodigious merit, which he used to rescue his mother from the fate she had created for herself.

This story became paradigmatic, particularly in East Asia, as a way to help relatives and friends after their deaths, and it is enshrined in the annual "Hungry Ghost Festival" (Ch. Yulanjie 盂蘭節; referred to in Japan as Obon お盆 or Bon), during which people (both Buddhists and non-Buddhists) engage in merit-generating activities designed to aid dead beings who have fallen into realms of suffering. According to tradition, on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the lunar calendar the gates of the hells open and their denizens enter the human world. The living provide them with food and entertainment, both to benefit them and to prevent the harm they may cause through jealousy or spite. Following Maudgalyāyana's example, some people make dedicated offerings to the religious community because this produces greater merit and is of more benefit to the dead.

Recitation of this story is often part of funeral ritual for the recently deceased in East Asia, and it is accompanied by making offerings to monks and nuns, often explicitly connected to an aspiration to benefit a particular person. In spite of a widespread belief that association with death is polluting, Buddhist monastics have become the primary officiants in death-related ceremonies in China, Japan, Vietnam, and Korea, and many temples derive much of their income from such activities. The rituals and gifts provided by laypeople aid the dead by transferring merit to them, which in turn helps them to move toward better rebirths, and the sponsors themselves also reap religious benefits through their aspirations and their giving.

Other rituals in India and other Asian countries are more explicit or even aggressive in their scope. In Japan, Buddhism outside of the monastic community tends to be almost exclusively tied to death rituals, leading one scholar to refer to lay Japanese Buddhism as "funeral Buddhism" (*sōshiki bukkyo* 葬式仏教; cf. Walter 2009: 247). Indeed, the practice of cremation appears to have entered Japanese culture along with Buddhism as part of its ritual apparatus. Thus, with the exception of members of the Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 tradition of Buddhism (which advocated a form of predestination regarding the afterlife), funeral rituals for the deceased appear to have been the norm for Buddhist practitioners in Japan. The chanting of prayers designed to guide the dead in the afterlife – to be reborn in a "Pure Land" for example – or making offerings at temples and burning incense to request various buddhas and bodhisattvas to guide and protect the deceased in the afterlife all appear to have increased in popularity beginning with the introduction of Buddhism to Japan in the late eighth century, along with funeral shrouds inscribed with mantras, and the like.

The performance of funeral rituals by Buddhist monks, while initially open only to the aristocracy, eventually was adopted by the peasantry, who benefited from the presence of wandering monks who traveled from village to village performing such services. It has been argued that with the decline of feudalism in Japan and the growth of a merchant class the resulting financial resources of former peasant villages enabled the establishment of permanent Buddhist temples explicitly for this purpose. Mariko Walter (2009: 250) notes that in the history of Japanese Buddhism "many Buddhist temples were founded

during the 200 years between the mid-fifteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries" – a period corresponding to precisely such a shift in economic fortunes in Japan.

This same period of time – from the fifteenth century onward – also saw an increase in the role of Shingon 真言 ("esoteric" or tantric) Buddhism in Japan in funeral ceremonies as well. Going beyond the simple dictates of ritual purification for the living and merit generation for the dead, Shingon rituals were designed for a variety of purposes, from consecrating the dirt or sand used in ceremonies to bestowing both lay and tantric vows upon the dead – along with conferral of a posthumous ordination name (*kaimyō* 戒名) – which designates them as followers of the Buddha and allows them to complete the Buddhist path without engaging in any training or adhering to monastic vows. During the ritual, the deceased person is given monastic vows and asked if he or she will be able to maintain them. Silence is taken as assent, and the theory behind this practice assumes that becoming a monk or nun and subsequently maintaining the precepts – dead people can't kill, steal, fornicate, etc. – will result in acquisition of prodigious amounts of merit and quickly lead to liberation, or at least a fortunate rebirth.

This repurposing of tantric scriptures for funeral rites is not unique to Japan, however, and is also seen in Tibet. The Sakya scholar Drak-pa-gyel-tsen (Grags pa rgyal mtshan, 1147– 1216), for example, composed numerous funerary ritual treatises by extracting passages from texts such as the *Elimination of All Negative Destinies Tantra* (*Sarvadurgati-pariśodhana-tantra*), as did later authors as well. These funerary works state that the body of the deceased should be consecrated by mantras and various ritual substances such as white mustard seeds while the officiant visualizes the purification of the dead person's karma. Finally, the ceremony concludes with the casting of oblations into a fire as offerings to various deities that might influence and protect the deceased. Although such procedures are typical of Tibetan Buddhist funeral rituals, outside of Tibet the historically less influential *Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate State* (*Bar do thos grol*, commonly referred to as the "Tibetan Book of the Dead") is more widely associated with Tibetan funerary traditions.

First popularized in the early twentieth century by Walter Evans-Wentz (1927; cf. Thurman 1994), this text differs in significant ways from other Tibetan funerary works. According to tradition, it is a set of "hidden treasure" (*gter ma*) texts concealed in the eighth century and later rediscovered in the fourteenth century, following which it was modified by various editors. Despite its popularity outside of Tibet as a presentation of Tibetan death rituals, *Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate State* is actually atypical of texts in that genre. In procedures derived from the *Elimination of All Negative Destinies Tantra*, the focus of activity is upon the officiant conducting the ritual, but in *Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate State* the deceased individual is addressed directly and instructions for meditation are repeated with the aim of prompting recognition of the reality behind experiences in the *bar do* and guiding the dead person in meditations designed to aid in advancement along the Buddhist path.

BUDDHISM AND DEATH IN THE MODERN ERA

In the twenty-first century, as Buddhism continues to spread into traditionally non-Buddhist cultures in Europe and America, death rituals have likewise come to take on a prominent role in the acculturation of Western Buddhist converts. Although much can be said (and has been said) about the unique manner in which Buddhism has become part of European and America cultures, it is only in recent decades that the larger ritual dimension of Buddhism

has taken hold. While many of the earliest generations of Buddhist adherents in America and Europe mainly focused on philosophical and meditative traditions, as convert communities of Buddhists have begun to stabilize there is increasing interest in constructing liturgies for various ritual purposes, including funerals.

Japanese Buddhism was one of the earliest Buddhist cultures to travel to Western countries, and from the earliest periods its priests performed death ceremonies for immigrant communities. Today many Western converts also participate in these events, some of which have been modified for modern society. One such innovation is rituals designed for aborted fetuses. In Japan, several temples specialize in this practice, and their grounds have thousands of memorials, often decorated with children's toys and emotional messages from parents who apologize to them for denying them an opportunity to be part of their families. The rites for these unborn children dispatch them to the "land of the buddhas and *kami*s," where they do not really die, but rather wait in stasis until a family is ready to accept them. The bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha (Jpn. Jizō 地藏) features prominently in these temples. According to tradition, Śākyamuni Buddha entrusted him with the care of sentient beings, and particularly children, after he departed the world. He watches over aborted fetuses and ensures that they do not remain for long in the state between death and life but quickly return to the land of the living in a loving home environment.

In the West, the first major generation of Buddhist converts from the 1950s and 1960s is approaching old age, and death rituals for both their loved ones and themselves have become an increasing priority. For practitioners in Chan (Jpn. Zen 禪) traditions, funeral rites and memorial services commonly involve recitation of popular Buddhist scriptures and/or mantras. Western adherents of Tibetan Buddhism often get a lama or fellow Buddhist to recite *Liberation through Hearing in the Intermediate State*, which has become increasingly popular in recent decades as a funerary text. For more traditionally minded practitioners, monks or tantric masters may be engaged to perform various traditional ceremonies, including the weekly ritual offering (*pūjā*; Tib. *mchod pa*) over the course of seven weeks, as well as a one-year observance.

Many lay Western Buddhists engage in practices that traditionally were the preserve of elite virtuosos, either monastics of full-time tantrics. They receive tantric initiations and engage in advanced meditations, and many train in death meditation in anticipation of making rapid progress in the intermediate state. Some even have their ashes interred in stūpas after death, which traditionally was reserved for the most revered masters. An example is Anagarika Govinda (1898–1985), a German convert who became a Buddhist monk. This approach to death is likely more broadly rooted in a very specific attitude toward conversion in general, in which the practitioner becomes a Buddhist at a "high level" – as a religious adept – rather than as a beginner devotee concerned mainly with accumulation of merit in hopes of improved rebirths.

In summation, the Buddhist tradition offers many of the same services and emotional comforts as other religions to the survivors of the departed, although it does so by couching them in distinctively Buddhist terminology and situating them in its own worldview, one that reinforces both the importance of the monastic community and core principles of the religion: virtuous conduct and support for renunciants pursuing awakening. In addition, however, the Buddhist tradition also offers individual practitioners an avenue for valorizing their own deaths and in the process reconciling themselves to it. These two aspects in combination form a cohesive approach to death that lends social stability to both communities – lay and practitioner – and does so in a manner that unites both.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

BUDDHISM AND MODERNITY

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Jay L. Garfield

INTRODUCTION: AUTHENTICITY
AND IMPERMANENCE

Those of us who are involved as teachers, scholars, or practitioners with Buddhism in the West are – whether we wish to be or not – involved in a complex process of interaction between two cultures. Just as in the West Socrates urged that the most important task set for us in life is to know ourselves, in the Buddhist tradition we are admonished to know the nature of our own minds as the key to awakening (*bodhi*). In every Buddhist tradition, to know the nature of the self and its objects is the fundamental prerequisite to cutting off the root of cyclic existence.

So even though it might seem like a kind of mundane and secular phenomenon, trying to understand the history and the sociology of the transmission of Buddhism to the West, understanding it is necessary for understanding ourselves, just because we are so intimately involved with it, and understanding ourselves is necessary for liberation (see the second chapter by Prebish in this volume). This is just one more instance of the need to pay attention to mundane, secular phenomena around us, even if our primary interests are soteriological. Of course, for those whose primary interest is the understanding of the contemporary Buddhist world for its own sake, it is plain that the engagement of Buddhism with modernity is an issue of concern. We should be alert as we examine this engagement to the inevitable transformations Buddhism will work on modern culture, as well as to the inevitable transformations that modernity will work on Buddhism. As we consider the transformations of modern culture in which the importation of Buddhism will issue, we should be aware of this as a missionary process, in which the West is largely a patient, not an agent. As we consider the ways in which Buddhism will inevitably modernize, we should be wary of the rhetoric of authenticity that can cloak a reactionary defensiveness among practitioners that can threaten the relevance of the Buddhadharma to the modern world.

Buddhism has been from the very beginning a missionary religion. Although this is a commonplace for anyone who has been involved in Buddhist Studies, it is something of which Western Buddhists aren't always explicitly aware when they first encounter Buddhadharma. Missionaries went out from Sāñchī to spread Buddhism throughout India; Missionaries went out as well to Sri Lanka, to China, to Indonesia, and of course eventually

to Tibet, Korea, and Japan, and Buddhism has spread through Asia not by accident, not by magic, not by sheer dint of the attractiveness or manifest truth of the Buddhadharma, but through deliberate missionary activity.

In every one of these transmissions within Asia, Buddhism has transformed the cultures that it has invaded. Equally importantly, in every one of these transmissions Buddhism itself has been transformed by the cultures that have adopted it. When we examine Buddhism's entry into China we see that Chinese society, Chinese philosophy, including the philosophical systems of Daoism and Confucianism, become deeply inflected by Buddhist ideas. We see the growth of Buddhist monasteries altering aspects of the economic and social organizations of China; and we see the debates between Buddhists and Daoists and Confucians as developing the Daoist and Confucian tradition in ways other than those in which they would have developed without this dialogue. When Buddhism was imported in Tibet, Tibetan society was transformed beyond recognition from its pre-Buddhist nature to its Buddhist nature (see the chapter by Stevenson in this volume).

As I indicated above, this transformative process is a two-way street, and it is instructive to examine the way Buddhism itself was articulated and developed in China and to compare it with the way it was articulated and developed in Tibet. The schools of Buddhism that developed in China – the Huayan tradition, the Chan tradition, the Tiantai tradition – look very different textually, doctrinally, and in the forms of practice they involve, from those that are developed in Tibet. The Indic scholasticism, as well as the emphasis on tantra we find in Tibet, are largely absent from China. The emphasis on *sūtra* (discourses attributed to the Buddha), the syncretism among Indian traditions, and the composition of apocryphal *sūtra*s we find in China are absent in Tibet (see the chapter by Hubbard in this volume). Meditational practices are very different, and while monastic discipline (*vinaya*) codes are distinct, actual monastic life looks quite different in Tibet and China. Given the topic of this chapter, there is no need to go into this in detail here. The issues are well-known.

Buddhist practitioners and scholars in almost every tradition valorize lineage, and each valorizes the preservation of the "authentic" Buddhist tradition over the centuries. But it is also a central tenet of all Buddhist doctrine that nothing gets preserved unchanged and pure even from moment to moment, so that the rhetoric of authenticity demands critique. Sometimes, that is, what appears to be heresy is in fact the most authentic and orthodox path. My own thoughts about what happens when Buddhism moves into the West are grounded in the conviction that the transmission of Buddhism to the West is in one sense completely continuous with what has happened throughout the history of Buddhism: its entry into diverse cultures, resulting in the transformation of those cultures and of Buddhism itself.

When we look from the West, for instance, at the multiple lineages of Buddhism in Asia, no serious scholar asks the narrow, parochial question, "Which lineage is the authentic Buddhism?" To do so would mark one as a narrow sectarian. One hopes as well that practitioners do not think this way. Rather, to the extent that we are interested in comparing traditions, we want to ask ourselves how and why Buddhism developed so productively in all of these different directions. This multiplicity of lines of development, and the continuity of growth, are signs of the *vitality* of the Buddhist tradition, not of its *weakness*. We don't expect that a whole tree is going to look just like the roots; we hope that on each branch flowers are going to develop; and we don't see the diversity of form, whether in a living organism or in a society, as a sign of ill health, but as a sign of vitality.

I emphasize all of this – even though much of it is commonplace – only because very often in the context of discussions of Buddhism and the modern world, when one mentions the ways Buddhism transforms Western culture, people are happy to see this transformation and to see a kind of improvement in Western culture, but then when they see respects in which Buddhist practice or Buddhist ideas themselves develop or evolve or transform in interaction with Western culture, they become afraid and they recoil in orthodox horror: the Buddhadharma is no longer authentic! It's no longer pure! It's no longer real Buddhism! Something happened to it! It is that reaction that I really want to put aside, because transformation and development in response to engagement with new cultural contexts and new sets of ideas have been happening to Buddhism from the moment the Buddha touched the Earth at Bodhgaya (see the chapter by Lang in this volume). Buddhism has been transforming because all compounded things are impermanent and Buddhism is a compounded phenomenon.

HISTORICAL COMPARISONS

Let us return to the difference between the transmission of Buddhism to China and the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet. This comparison will provide us with a useful way of understanding some of the interesting features of its transmission to the West and will help us to see both what is continuous with the history of transmission within Asia and what is subtly different. I will necessarily be guilty of a bit of caricature and overstatement, but the caricatures will be useful.

Here is a big difference between the two transmissions: when Buddhism came to Tibet, it came to a country that had no written language, very little political unity, a religious tradition that was only really practiced by a tiny minority, and no written philosophical tradition. So, while it would be an exaggeration to say that Tibet was a *tabula rasa* for Buddhism, it wouldn't be *too much* of an exaggeration. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama sometimes puts it,

> When we Tibetans decided that we needed a civilization, we decided we needed three things: We needed a religion, we needed clothes and we needed food. We looked at China; they had the best food so we took that. We looked at Mongolia; they had the best clothes, we took those; and we looked South to India; they had the best religion, so we took that.
> (http://www.info-buddhism.com/Buddhism_in_the_West_Jay_Garfield.html)

Tibet deliberately adopted a high-medieval version of Indian Buddhism, and in particular the tradition developed in Nālandā University, and deliberately set itself about the task of replicating that very tradition and perpetuating and preserving it, creating the strangest museum culture that the world has ever seen – one developed to preserving a moment in tenth/eleventh-century Indian culture forever, including its monastic structure, university curriculum, schools of doctrine, as well as traditions of medicine, poetry, etc. Tibet did a remarkably good job of this, and for that the world – not just the Buddhist world, and certainly not just the Tibetan Buddhist world – owes Tibet an enormous debt of gratitude. Without this preservation, with a remarkable, though to be sure not perfect, degree of fidelity, much of Indian learning and culture would have been lost, including most of Mahāyāna Buddhist culture.

In China the situation was very different. When Buddhism came to China, China was already a very old civilization, with a written language, a tradition of high culture, a well-organized government and educational system, and two well-established philosophical and religious traditions – the Confucian and Daoist traditions – sophisticated literature, poetry, and art (see the chapters by Pacey in this volume). Buddhism came to this sophisticated culture from outside through missionaries. When the Dharma arrived, most literate and sophisticated people in China thought that Buddhism was weird, crazy, possibly dangerous to the social and political order, and at least *barbarian*. And from the perspective of Chinese culture, one would have to say that they were right on all counts.

For this reason, the penetration of Buddhism into China was slow and deliberate. It was first adopted by what we might call the middle class, an educated elite who were attracted to the unusual language and were interested in the philology, in the texts, and gradually developed an interest in Buddhist doctrine and practice. Of course Buddhism penetrated China very thoroughly over time, but it was a gradual and partial penetration: China never became entirely Buddhist. Buddhism always lived alongside the Confucian and Daoist traditions; and while it proliferated in a number of different schools, none of these became politically dominant forces or majority religious traditions.

Moreover, when Buddhism came to China it came in dribs and drabs, with an unsystematic selection of texts delivered, and the complete Indian tradition never entirely transplanted; whereas when Buddhism came to Tibet an entire canon along with its history and doxography were delivered as a unit from India (give or take a bit). The lacunae in the textual tradition are often as important in understanding the history of Chinese Buddhism as are the texts transmitted and composed in China.

There is a further difference that is important to note: when Buddhism came to Tibet the Tibetan language was basically reconfigured and reinvented in order to translate Sanskrit, and it became a highly Sanskritized language as a vehicle for translation, simply because there was no philosophical vocabulary in Tibetan when Buddhism arrived. When the Dharma came to Tibet, the decision to translate the Buddhist canon into Tibetan was the decision to create a regimented system of translation, through which the classical Tibetan language came into existence as a vehicle expressly designed to translate Sanskrit. Translations were accomplished by teams of eminent scholars responsible to an imperial translation committee that ensured both the quality and homogeneity in style and technique of translations.

When Buddhism came to China, on the other hand, classical Chinese was a highly developed and very subtle philosophical language with an extraordinary vocabulary for expressing philosophical ideas and a rich set of metaphors, arguments, and concepts in common currency. Anyone who wanted to translate could pick up a Sanskrit text and translate in his own way, using whatever vocabulary and textual approaches he saw fit. Most used the philosophical language of Daoism and Confucianism to render technical terms in Buddhist Sanskrit. The combination of multiple translators, a pre-existing philosophical vocabulary or set of vocabularies that more apparently than really overlapped Sanskrit vocabulary in semantic range, the haphazard order in which texts arrived in China, the lacunae in the literature that did eventually arrive, and the lack of any central control over the translation process led to the creation of Chinese Buddhist translations that often differ dramatically from one another and that deploy language that encodes philosophical meanings very different from those encoded by Indian Buddhism.

Now I find this contrast instructive, because when we think about the nature of the transmission of Buddhism to the West and we look for past models on the basis of which to understand it, the model is not Tibet. As Buddhism has come to the West it has arrived in a culture that is already literate, that already has political institutions and religious institutions and sophisticated philosophy and art and literature and ideas. It has come unsystematically, in dribs and drabs, with large textual lacunae remaining. No imperial translation mandate has been created. And Buddhism comes as a strange new import. Some people find it weird, some people find it dangerous, and some people even find it barbarian! We should imagine ourselves as in the very state that China was in when Buddhism first came to China.

And so for that reason, just as in China we find the development of a number of very different Buddhist systems of translation, systems of practice, and systems of philosophy, each of them inflected by antecedent ideas, we should expect as we see Buddhism develop in the West that it will penetrate slowly, that it will penetrate in many diverse forms with many different translational ideas, inflected in very important ways by different ideas from the West. And just as Buddhism is alive and well and thriving in China, Korea, and Japan, because it draws nourishment not only from its Indian roots but also from its East Asian rain and soil, it's going to be alive and well in the West for years to come because it draws nourishment not only from its Indian roots but from the rain and fertility of Western ideas, and that needs to be a cause for celebration, not for anxiety, as we go forward.

MODERN DIFFERENCES

Now, similarities are one thing, but there is also a distinctive feature of the transmission of Buddhism to the West, one that has no real antecedent in Asian transmissions. In Asia, while Buddhism was transmitted *from* India *to* other cultures, there was very little or no back-influence from those cultures on Indian Buddhism or, for that matter, any such back-influence anywhere along the chain of transmission. China did not affect Indian Buddhism, Japan did not affect Chinese Buddhism or Korean Buddhism, Sri Lankan Buddhism did not affect Indian Buddhism in return, and so forth: the transmission of Buddhism in Asia was very much a one-way street. But when we examine the transmission of Buddhism to the West, things look very different because this transmission occurs in the context of globalization and in the context of significant Asian diasporas in the West; and as a consequence, one of the very important distinctive phenomena that we see as Buddhism encounters modernity through the medium of the transmission to the West is the reflection of Western ideas and Western Buddhisms back into Asia.

There is a second major difference between the transmissions of Buddhism within Asia and its dissemination to the West, because in Asia we typically saw the transmission of a single lineage or a single tradition from one place to another at a time. Nālandā went to Tibet, the Chan tradition comes to central China, the Tiantai tradition into South China, the Theravāda tradition into Sri Lanka and into Thailand. But when we look at the importation to the West, we see simultaneous transmissions of Theravāda traditions, of Tiantai traditions, of Zen Traditions, of multiple Tibetan lineages all coming in at once, often to the same places! Because of their co-presence we see practitioners picking up not a single tradition or a single lineage, but a long list of practices and ideas and texts from different lineages; we also see Buddhist scholarship and the evolution of doctrine informed not by single textual or oral transmission lineages, but rather by the integration of ideas deriving from multiple lineages, coming to us in various languages. This multiple simultaneous

transmission will have a profound effect on the shape of Western Buddhism and on the shape of Asian Buddhism as a consequence.

This complexity was evident right at the very beginning of the propagation of Buddhism in the West, as Western Orientalists, spiritual seekers, historians, and philologists encountered Asia. But this encounter, beginning at the dawn of the nineteenth century, also introduces a third distinctive feature of Buddhism's modern avatar: as Buddhism has moved to the West, Buddhism was, and continues to be, associated in an almost paradoxical way with the idea of *modernism*. The founding moment of all of this – this is again a bit of a caricature – is that strange American Henry Steele Olcott's (1832–1927) arrival in Sri Lanka and "discovering" that the Buddhism that he found in Sri Lanka was the most modern, most "secular" religion possible. Olcott noticed that Buddhism is atheistic; that it emphasizes the use of reason; that it encourages textual study; and he saw here the embodiment of all of the Enlightenment ideals he regarded as incompatible with the religions of the West.

One might expect that Olcott would then simply return to America to champion Buddhism. And of course he did. But before doing so, he did what every Buddhist teacher must do: he found a disciple. And the disciple he found was Anagarika Dharmapala (Don David Hewavitarne, 1864–1933). Olcott convinced the young Anagarika Dharmapala (a) that Buddhism is the true religion of the modern world and that he shouldn't become a Christian; and (b) that it was his mission to bring modernity *through* Buddhism into Asia. So Anagarika Dharmapala set out both to modernize Buddhist practice in Sri Lanka and Asia and to modernize Asia through the propagation of Buddhism.

The discovery that Buddhism isn't ancient but modern, the inflection of Buddhism by modernity in Asia, begins at exactly the same time that the Dharma was transmitted to the West. This representation of Buddhism as modern – and more recently as *science*, as *ecocentric*, as concerned with *human rights*, and even as *feminist* – has been a constant trope in the development of Buddhism in the West and, as a consequence, in modern Asia. This coevality of Western Buddhism and Western–inflected Asian Buddhism gives rise to a history of Asian Buddhism adopting Western ideas in the course of its confrontation with modernity, and the West adopting Buddhist ideas at the same time. This is the deep tension that runs through Buddhism today. It is represented in Asia, and in the West; in the Dharma Centre and in the academy at the same time as ancient wisdom passed down through an infallible lineage, and as completely modern and critical.

Of course I am painting with a very broad brush, and to fill in the detail would require discussion of each of the many transmissions of Buddhism to the West, and that is well beyond the scope of this chapter; but the big picture is still valuable, because this transmission to the West and the concomitant transmission of the West and of Western ideas into Buddhist cultures has been accelerated in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries by the phenomenon of globalization and by the Diaspora of Asian Buddhist communities in the West, and understanding that big picture is central to understanding the state of Buddhism today.

THE MODERN WESTERN INFLECTION OF BUDDHISM

Let us now review some of the important ways in which Western ideas have inflected Buddhism not only in the West, but also in Asian cultures, and the ways in which they continue to do so. I urge that we think of this not as the pollution of a stainless transmission,

but rather as the kind of development and flourishing of Buddhism that has made it a vital tradition over the past two-and-a-half millennia. This will not be an exhaustive survey, but should do enough to indicate the lay of the land.

Let us consider the socially engaged Buddhist movement that arose initially in South East Asia through his work with people like Thich Nhat Hanh (1926–) and Ajahn Sulak Sivaraksa (1933–). This tradition is a very new tradition, and it is one of Buddhist organizations engaged in social service; in the development of schools, of hospitals, of social welfare agencies, of hospice care, and so forth. This is a feature of Buddhist activity that many of us in the West take to be a natural outgrowth of teachings of compassion that have been present in the Buddhist teachings from the time of the Buddha. But this apparent truism raises a difficult question: if socially engaged Buddhism, or eco-Buddhism, is a natural outgrowth of the teachings of compassion, why did it take a little over 2,000 years for these things to happen?

This is a complicated question, with a complicated answer, but the real explanation of the recent emergence of these movements has less to do with any historical necessity internal to the Buddhist tradition than it has to do with the fact that the leaders of these modern movements interacted with Christian and Catholic missionaries as well as secular activists attracted to Buddhism. The Christian example showed that a religious organization could indeed be involved in mundane social welfare activities, and the Buddhist activists brought these issues to the fore within Buddhist communities, drawing from Western secular movements. It was hence an inflection of Buddhism by Western secular and religious traditions that brought about the socially engaged Buddhist movement. This is not a bad thing, either for the West or for Buddhism. But it is an example of how modernity has transformed Buddhism, and, many would argue, for the better.

Eco-Buddhism is another pertinent example. Consider Thailand, where the institution of the ordination of trees has been introduced as a way of protecting forests, followed by the ordination of waterways and other natural phenomena (see the chapter by Darlington in this volume). This is ordination in a metaphorical sense of course; but the idea that Buddhism is of direct ecological import – an idea encouraged and defended even by HH the Dalai Lama and HH the Karmapa, as a natural outgrowth of the doctrine of interdependence and the cultivation of compassion – is to be taken literally. But if we ask where this ecological teaching is promulgated within the classical Buddhist tradition, we will come up empty. It is not present in any Pāli discourses (*sutta*), or in any Mahāyāna discourses, or in any classical Indian or Chinese philosophical treatises (*śāstra*). Instead, it comes from the Western ecology movement; it came from the Transcendentalists, and from the Greens. And so this is another way in which Buddhism has been enriched and inflected by Western ideas. Once again, this is not a bad thing.

Institutionally, feminism has done wonderful things for Buddhism. The drive for the restoration of the full ordination lineage for nuns in the Theravāda and in the Tibetan traditions through the Chinese lineage did not come initially from Asian Buddhists. This came from Sakyadhita, and from the work of Western nuns who brought Western feminism into Buddhism and created the impetus for full ordination (see the chapter by Tsomo in this volume). To be sure, the lineage – with active, fully ordained nuns – was already prominent in Taiwan. But the extension to the broader community of women religious was very much a product of Western modernism, as, we might point out, was the very pan-Buddhist consciousness that was required to transmit that lineage from China back to Thailand and Sri Lanka whence it came, and to the Tibetan diaspora community in its curiously European

face. So again this is a way in which Buddhism has learned from modern ideas; feminism is a modern idea; it's not a traditionally Asian, nor a Buddhist, idea.

There is another kind of intra-Buddhist phenomenon that derives from the Western transmission that is less appreciated but nonetheless interesting, and takes us back to that early Buddhist modernist Henry Steele Olcott. Perhaps the strangest thing that Olcott did was, first, to decide that Buddhism needed a flag, and then to design one. Now, of course, that Buddhist flag is ubiquitous in Asian Buddhist events and locales. I find it amusing to ask random Asian Buddhists about the origins of the flag. I am usually told sincerely that it dates from the time of the Buddha, or at least from the time of King Aśoka (ca. 304–232 BCE). Few acknowledge that it was designed by an American military officer. Why is this important? Olcott's idea was that if you had a flag you had unity, and Olcott was worried that there was so much difference between Japanese Buddhism, Korean Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and Sri Lankan Buddhism that this threatened the very unity of the one religion that was truly modern. If only they had the same flag, he reasoned, people would know that Buddhism was a unitary phenomenon.

While the flag may not have succeeded in homogenizing the Buddhadharma, the transmission to the West that Olcott's enthusiasm helped stimulate, as well as the pan-Asianism that his disciple Anagarika Dharmapala's mission to India helped to galvanize, have moved us in that direction. If we attend to the Buddhist world in Asia now, one of the consequences of the multiple simultaneous transmissions of Buddhist traditions to the *West* is that in the West Zen practitioners started talking to Tibetan Lamas who started talking to Goenka meditators who also started talking to Korean Zen practitioners. Sometimes a few Theravāda monks join the conversation, and all of a sudden sitting around a table in a Dharma center or university in Sydney, Hamburg, or Chicago are people in red robes, grey robes, yellow robes, and brown robes all talking about ideas together. Then back in India, we find Tibetans going on Goenka retreats or sitting in Zen meditation. In Japan, we see Tibetan Lamas giving Mahāmudrā instruction in Zendos. In New Mexico, a Westerner and a Tibetan might be found teaching together in a Japanese Zendo. And finally, we find in Sarnath a Vinaya conference drawing together monks and nuns from all Buddhist traditions for the first time since the great councils, an event that would have been impossible without the mediation of Western modernity. So the interaction of Buddhists in the West, who in Asia might have said: "I am a practitioner of this lineage, your practice is not actually Buddhism," leads to Buddhists around the world saying instead: "See that flag? We all rally behind the same flag. So, whatever superficial differences divide us, we all follow the same Buddhadharma."

This, I believe, is the most profound effect of the transmission of Buddhism to the West and of its absorption of modern ideas, including the ideas of progressivity and pluralism. Buddhists in different traditions are learning from each other. The insights that are available in the Tibetan tradition are often valuable to practitioners and scholars of the Zen tradition; ideas from the Zen tradition are often equally valuable to practitioners and scholars in the Tibetan tradition. For centuries, great scholarship and practice have been present in every one of these lineages. But for too long, they have been hermetically sealed from one another. This is the legacy of the rhetoric of authenticity. It has been the reflection of Buddhism through the West in the context of modern globalization that has broken down those walls to the benefit of all of those concerned.

This interaction has been driven by a variety of forces, including immigration, exile, and missionary activity, but also the institution of modern Buddhist scholarship – both Western

and Asian – usually in the context of universities and colleges, but sometimes in the context of independent Dharma centers. Academic Buddhist Studies has had significant reflective influence on Buddhist practice because modern scholars tend to approach material differently from the way people in many traditional Buddhist cultures approach study. For one thing, modern scholars tend to focus on a kind of philological and historical completeness. We like to read a lot of different texts, and we like to read primary texts as well as commentaries. We work to excavate texts; we edit them; we read them; we translate and compare texts from different traditions, extant in different languages.

By contrast, many of the traditionally Asian centers of Buddhist learning have fairly rigid, narrow historical curricula where very often students study primarily secondary literature, monastic textbooks, or commentaries, and not root texts. Even when they do study root texts, they often read only one or two root texts in a tradition. And when they study commentaries, they tend not to study rival commentaries from other schools, but only the commentary of their own lineage. So for instance if you were to be studying Middle Way School (Madhyamaka) works in most monastic colleges in Tibet or in Indian Tibet, you would not read *Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way* (*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*). You might in an advanced course memorize *Entry into the Middle Way* (*Madhyamakāvatāra*), but you would only seriously study it through a single commentary within your tradition – or, more likely, through a textbook or digest. You certainly would not even read commentaries even from other Tibetan traditions, let alone those composed in languages other than Tibetan.

If, on the other hand, you were to study Madhyamaka in most modern colleges or universities you would begin by reading the *Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way*; you would read several other texts by Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250 CE); you would read several Indian commentaries; and then you would compare several Tibetan commentaries, and perhaps a Chinese commentary or two because that would be regarded as the right way to study the texts. As more and more traditional scholars and practitioners are educated in, or come to teach in, modern universities, this approach to textual study and to conceptualizing the structure of the Buddhist canon as a complex, conflicted, transcultural, progressive, multilingual canon infuses the world of Buddhist practice in its more traditional centers.

As a further consequence, strange things begin to appear on the bookshelves of traditional scholars and of students in traditional Buddhist centers of practice and learning. If you enter student hostels at the Central University of Tibetan Studies in Sarnath, for instance, you will find not only Sanskrit and Tibetan editions of texts, but also translations by Jeffrey Hopkins, Robert Thurman, or Donald Lopez sitting on students' desks. When students are supposed be studying a particular text in Tibetan, these Tibetan students are very often reading English translations and English commentaries, in part because they find the English much more accessible than the classical Tibetan, but for the most part because they find the modern scholarly approach to these texts by translators and editors who bring these texts into a larger context more illuminating than that of the classical scholars who are often providing little more than word glosses. As a consequence, modern readings, often inflected by Western philosophical ideas, are now moving back into Asia as students study these modern texts, who learn Buddhism in in a modern register.

And this phenomenon of course is also opening Buddhist scholars' eyes to the presence of a sophisticated Western philosophical tradition that underlies a lot of these translations that they are reading. As a consequence, we see Tibetan, Japanese, or Chinese Buddhist scholars beginning to turn to the study of Western philosophy as a second way into the ideas of Buddhist philosophy – sometimes as a *pūrvapakṣa*, as an opponent to be refuted, but

sometimes as a different way of putting some of the same points. And so, just as in China we saw Buddhism inflected by Daoism and Confucianism, in the West and in Asia we are going to see Buddhism inflected by the history of Western philosophy, the philosophical tradition that undergirds modernity.

Henry Steele Olcott's modernism of course is still alive and well; and we see that in the very rich and ongoing engagement with Buddhism and the sciences, in particular of course theoretical physics and neuroscience and cognitive science, which have been of enormous interest to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and to many other Buddhist scholars; and Buddhism as a reservoir of techniques has been of great interest for instance to people in theory of pain reduction, stress reduction, and so forth. Programs such as *Mind and Life*, *Science for Monks*, the *Tenzin Gyatso Scholars Program*, and others are integrating Buddhism with modern science either through research or through curriculum development. These programs are motivated by the conviction that Buddhism and science are naturally in harmony; that they share the same basic outlook, the same empirical concern, and that their results will converge. While some might say that this convergence is inevitable because Buddhism always was a science, others see the convergence as inevitable because of the recent embrace of science by Buddhism, an embrace that has, perhaps surprisingly, been eagerly reciprocated.

The fecund interaction between Buddhism and science reflects and reinforces Buddhist modernism. That the techniques and analyses of Buddhism turn out to be of interest to scientists burnishes Buddhism's modernist credentials. But the genuine openness of Buddhist scholars and practitioners to developments in physics and psychology exemplifies Buddhist modernity and demonstrates that this is a tradition that is open to empirical science and to reason. In this interaction not only does Buddhism contribute to Western science, but Western science contributes to Buddhism as well. When the Dalai Lama teaches about emptiness, for instance, very often he'll mention quantum mechanics. When he talks about the nature of mind, he'll very often mention phenomena in consciousness studies or in neuroscience. These ideas and examples come straight out of the modern laboratory in yet another instance of the inflection of Buddhism by modernity.

THE PROBLEM OF AUTHENTICITY
IN MODERNITY

It is a deep intellectual reflex of participants in an ancient intellectual or religious tradition to take one's task as the inheritor of that tradition to be preserving pristine and unaltered that which has been handed to us by our forebears and teachers. And so when we see transformation or change in a tradition, insiders instinctively think of degeneration, and the cant of the degeneration of the Dharma has always been part of Buddhist rhetoric. From a Buddhist point of view, history is often conceived as degeneration from an omniscient teacher through more and more fallible human beings, with the Dharma gradually attenuating on the way to disappearance. That vision is central to Buddhism's self-conception.

In a Western context, however, we think the other way around about history. We conceive of history as progress from a primitive to a more enlightened view. Kant, in his discussion of the *Aufklärung*, for instance, was talking about human progress as an emergence from, not a sinking into, darkness. Now those are two very different understandings of history. From a modern perspective, even in the Buddhist tradition we see *progress*, even if that progress is not acknowledged within the tradition. A Western scholar sees increasing

sophistication of Buddhist philosophical thought, productive proliferation of readings, and improvements in social institutions and practice.

As Buddhism engages more deeply with modernity, we can expect this modernist conception of Buddhism to replace the self-conception in terms of decline. But that will take time and effort, because for now the Buddhist tradition is a deeply progressive tradition that is beset by anxiety about that very progress. The typical Buddhist commentary begins by saying: "I'm not saying anything new. All I'm doing is repeating what's been said before." Of course if that were true, nobody would read the commentary. If it really had all been said before, there would be no reason to waste a palm leaf. But the traditions are each full of this self-deprecation of originality. On the other hand, we find not surprisingly – a vindication of the modern perspective – that those whose work is valued most within any Buddhist tradition are, and always have been, the most theoretically innovative and creative teachers and scholars. Those texts we read, and to which we return, in the Indian tradition are read and re-read precisely because while they build on what went before, they innovate, despite their protestations to the contrary.

So innovation and progress are nothing new, nothing especially modern, in the history of Buddhism, only its acknowledgment. But this also means that when we note, as I have been noting, the panoply of changes wrought in the Buddhist tradition in the West and in Asia as a result of its interaction with modernity, we should not react in horror and worry that Buddhism is no longer authentic, that it's been *changed*. To react that way is to forget both what Buddhism is about and to forget its most fundamental teachings. Buddhism is fundamentally about solving a problem, and the problem is suffering. It's fundamentally about a diagnosis of the cause of that problem, and the cause of that problem is attraction and aversion grounded in confusion. Buddhist practice is grounded in the conviction that the elimination of that confusion can solve the problem and that the Buddha outlined a path to that solution. None of that has been abandoned in Buddhism's engagement with modernity, just as none of this was abandoned in any of the countless transformations of Buddhist doctrine and practice between the time of the Buddha and the modern era; none of that core commitment has been fundamentally transformed, even though its articulation has been and continues to be altered in countless ways.

And in the *Discourse Turning the Wheel of Dharma* (*Dhammacakka-pavatanna-sutta*), the very first teaching that Śākyamuni Buddha gave upon gaining awakening, he said, "I teach you a path by the middle. It is not a path of annihilation, and it is not a path of permanence." If anything is central to Buddhism, it is that statement. The path of annihilation in the case of the personal continuum is the extreme view according to which that continuum is cut: that there is no identity and no continuity between successive stages of the individual. The path of permanence is the extreme view according to which there is something that persists unchanged through transformation, a self that is the basis of that transformation. The Path of the Middle is the path that says that even though the continuum is constantly changing it is never terminated.

So it is with respect to the continuum of Buddhist teachings, Buddhist transmissions, and Buddhist practices. In the Buddhist tradition we have a continuum of teaching and practice that is constantly changing and never cut. We do not have to be bothered by the fact that there is nothing permanent that persists through that change, so long as the continuum continues to develop and to provide a path to the alleviation of suffering. Nothing could be more Buddhist than impermanence.

PART III

THE BUDDHIST
SOCIAL
WORLD

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

BUDDHISM AND GENDER

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Karma Lekshe Tsomo

INTRODUCTION

The Buddhist goal of awakening – from a deluded, obscured state of awareness to an awakened, enlightened state – is said to be gender inclusive. In an unawakened state, human beings are beset by greed, hatred, and ignorance, desire, anger, attachment, pride, confusion, jealousy, and all the other afflictive emotions (*kleśa*) that cause unhappiness and dissatisfaction. In an awakened state, by contrast, beings are spontaneously kind, compassionate, selfless, and wise. The premise of all the Buddhist philosophical systems is that it is possible for sentient beings of all descriptions to overcome ignorance and achieve a clear, awakened state of consciousness with intuitive insight into the true nature of things. Consciousness *per se* – pure knowing and awareness, as distinct from thoughts – has no gender. How does this fundamentally nongendered path translate in the lived experiences of ordinary women and men in Buddhist societies?

Like other South Asian systems, the Buddhist worldview is premised on the theory of repeated rebirth that was commonly accepted during the Buddha's time and reportedly verified by him through meditative experience. Due to ignorance (*avidyā*, "unknowing"), sentient beings spin around and around in the cycle of rebirth (*saṃsāra*), experiencing birth, sickness, old age, and death again and again. In this cycle, personal identities are continuously changing, from babyhood to early childhood to the teenage years to adulthood. Sentient beings also change their identities from lifetime to lifetime, taking rebirth in the realms of human beings, animals, hungry ghosts, gods, and hell beings, depending on their actions and the motivation behind them. Buddhist practice focuses on improving the quality of awareness and the quality of actions. By engaging in wholesome actions and avoiding unwholesome actions, the goal is to wake up, become free from this vicious cycle, and achieve liberation (*nirvāna*). Beings may also change genders in different existences and, in many societies, rebirth as a male is generally regarded as preferable. In view of the many sufferings that women experience, many Buddhists regard a female rebirth as the result of unwholesome actions, or bad karma. Ultimately, concepts of gender are created by the mind, shaped by societies and cultures. At the same time, gender discrimination and sexism are rooted in greed, hatred, and ignorance, and are significant sources of human suffering.

The Buddhist teachings, a voluminous body of literature that developed over many centuries, are fundamentally concerned with the transformation of consciousness and liberation from suffering. The root cause of suffering is a being's mistaken understanding of the nature of the self and an attachment to self. Mistaken understandings of the nature of gender identity may also be a source of suffering. Attitudes toward gender are learned or constructed on the basis of signals received from one's social and cultural environment – girls are rewarded for doing the things that society expects girls to do, whereas boys are rewarded for doing things that society expects boys to do. This binary concept of gender ignores the fact that a percentage of babies are born with indeterminate genitalia and may arbitrarily be assigned a gender, sometimes without the knowledge of the parents. From a Buddhist perspective, gender identities may be influenced not only by genes, anatomy, and socialization, but also by predispositions carried over from past lives. For example, a person who is male in this lifetime may have been female many times in past lives, and vice versa. These affinities may affect gender identifications and gendered constructions of self.

BUDDHIST CONCEPTIONS OF GENDER

When approaching Buddhism through the lens of gender, the first step is to explore what is meant by a human being. From a Buddhist perspective, the term "person" designates a sentient being who possesses physical, emotional, epistemological, karmic, and mental components – the five aggregates (*skandha*). Ordinarily, the identification of persons in gendered terms (as female, male, or other) is based on physical characteristics, primarily genitalia, vocal tenor, and so on, and also on socially acknowledged behaviors. In general, gender identity is less important than human identity, which is a precious opportunity to achieve liberation from suffering. The ultimate goal is to awaken from a state of delusion to a state of awakened awareness, which is possible for all sentient beings, whether female or male. Moreover, gender identities are not intrinsic or fixed, since beings may take male or female bodies in different lifetimes. Attachment to a particular gender identity, like attachment to other phenomena, is a potential source of suffering or dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, gender identifications have enormous personal, social, and political significance. The belief that a female rebirth is the result of unwholesome karma may significantly affect the psychological and spiritual development of girls and women, regardless of their theoretically equal potential.

In addition to a preference for male identity, there also seems to be a preference for heterosexual identity in the Buddhist texts. The writers of classical Buddhist texts seem to have assumed that heterosexual preference is universal and that other behaviors may be explored when a partner of the opposite sex is not available. One exception is the *paṇḍaka*, a being without precise definition who is apparently born different and appears variously as a hermaphrodite, homosexual, and sexual profligate. In any case, presumably because of this ambiguity, *paṇḍaka*s are not allowed to receive ordination. The major explicit reference to homosexuality in the early Buddhist texts is a prohibition against homosexual behavior that occurs in the monastic code (*vinaya*) for monks, who are prohibited from all sexual behavior. The texts also mention trans-sexuality, stipulating that a monk who becomes a woman does not need to ordain again as a nun, and vice versa. Many images of awakened beings also seem to transcend gender distinctions, appearing effeminate or even androgynous. For example, Avalokiteśvara, bodhisattva of compassion, is male in India and in early

Chinese representations, but gradually comes to be represented as female, in the form of Guanyin 觀音 (see Yü 2001).

The Buddhist literary corpus is remarkable in containing a large number of texts by and about women in ancient Indian religious life, including the monastic discipline literature, *Verses of Elder Nuns* (*Therīgāthā*), the *Stories* (*Apadāna*), *100 Legends* (*Avadānaśataka*), and others (Blackstone 2000; Collett 2006; Murcott 2006). These texts attest to the capabilities and high levels of realization of women at the time of the Buddha, but offer little analysis of the differences between sex and gender. The nearest thing to a treatment of gender is found in the *Discourse on Bondage* (*Saññoga Sutta*), where it is said that noting gender-related characteristics inwardly gives rise to delight and excitement. This leads one to note gender-related characteristics outwardly, in those of the other gender, which also gives rise to delight and excitement. The desire to be bonded with that delight and excitement leads people to get caught up in it, which is a kind of bondage (*saññoga*). The remedy is to reverse this pattern by transcending one's gender. Sensual desire is not seen as evil, but as problematic, since it leads to desires and disappointments. Freedom from sensual desires and their consequences is seen as liberating.

Overall, it is easy to trace a pronounced bias against sexuality in Buddhist literature, with the Buddha himself voicing a decided preference for celibacy (*brahmacariya*; Numrich 2009). These biases surely reflect the values and preferences of the monks who transmitted the texts orally for hundreds of years and dominated Buddhist literature thereafter. Identifying with one's own gender is thought to give rise to sexual desire, whereas understanding the lack of any essentialized gender identity is associated with overcoming sexual desire. Since sexual desire is regarded as the proximate cause of continued rebirth in cyclic existence, overcoming sexual desire is useful on the path to liberation. Through a Buddhist lens, stereotypical "feminine" and "masculine" characteristics are projections or imputations of the mind and lack any essential referent. To avoid the entanglements of sensual desire, then, is to free the mind of such entanglements and their concomitant frustrations and sufferings (*dukkha*).

THE LEGEND OF MAHĀMĀYĀ AND MAHĀPRAJĀPATĪ

The story of gender in Buddhism begins in what today is Nepal. According to legend, Mahāmāyā and Mahāprajāpatī, two sisters from a warrior clan, married King Śuddhodana. After dreaming of a white elephant and other auspicious signs, Mahāmāyā gave birth to Prince Siddhārtha in a place called Lumbinī, but died just seven days later and took rebirth in Tuṣita Heaven. To this day, a pillar commemorates the site of Siddhārtha's birthplace. After Mahāmāyā's passing, her sister Mahāprajāpatī suckled the child and raised him along with her own son, Nanda. After he had grown, he renounced his wife, child, and the luxuries of the palace to pursue the spiritual quest. Some years later, after the prince became a fully awakened buddha, he returned to his hometown of Kapilavastu on his way to settle a dispute over water rights and explain the futility of war (Dash 2008). As he spoke a single Dharma verse, King Śuddhodana achieved the state of a once-returner, while Mahāprajāpatī achieved the state of a stream-enterer, both significant Buddhist spiritual achievements.

Once King Śuddhodana had passed away, Mahāprajāpatī approached the Awakened One in Kapilavastu and requested permission to go forth into homelessness. The Buddha discouraged the idea, but did not outright refuse her. Whether his hesitation was due to the

hardships of the mendicant lifestyle (especially for women), fears of social disapproval, the bleak status of women at that time, or simply a test of the queen's determination is impossible to say. Mahāprajāpatī was depressed by his response but did not abandon her resolve. Instead, she walked several hundred miles to Vaiśālī in northern India to pursue her petition, accompanied by a retinue of 500 noblewomen who similarly wished to join the Saṃgha, the monastic order. Clothed in renunciant garb, with shaven head, Mahāprajāpatī arrived covered in dust and sweat, and recounted the Buddha's reluctance to Ānanda, the Buddha's cousin and closest disciple. When Ānanda heard her story, he was moved to intercede on the women's behalf and asked whether women are capable of achieving the fruits of Buddhist practice (stream enterer, once-returner, nonreturner, and foe destroyer). When the Buddha affirmed that they are, Ānanda reminded him of the debt of gratitude he owed to Mahāprajāpatī and thus skillfully secured permission for women to enter the Saṃgha. In this way, Mahāprajāpatī became the first Buddhist nun (*bhikkhunī*).

The story has a twist, however, since the Buddha reportedly asked her to accept eight "weighty" rules (*gurudharma*) as a precondition, to which she agreed. After the Buddha's passing, these discriminatory rules were applied to all fully ordained Buddhist nuns. These strictures have effectively subordinated nuns to monks and influenced attitudes toward women in Buddhist societies ever since. Gender bias of this nature is not surprising in the patriarchal context of ancient India, but it is surprising in a tradition that promises liberation for all. Although these discriminatory rules are presented as the Buddha's own pronouncements, they no doubt originated long after his demise, and they have served to reinscribe and institutionalize the subordinate status of women in Buddhist societies, especially in monastic structures.

Buddhist texts send mixed signals about women's capabilities. Some passages praise their qualities and achievements, while others enumerate their failings. In the *Gradual Collection* (*Aṅguttara Nikāya*), the Buddha commends preeminent women disciples by name: Khemā is recognized for her wisdom, Uppalavaṇṇā and Paṭācārā for their monastic discipline, Dhammadinna for her skill in teaching Dhamma, Nandā for her dedication, Soṇā for her joyful effort, and so on. At one point in the *Stories*, the Buddha prompts Mahāprajāpatī to display her supernormal powers to dispel the notion that women are incapable of full realization (Krey 2010: 18). These nuns challenged the prevailing notion that women lack intelligence. A *bhikkhunī* named Somā declared that for a woman of knowledge and insight, gender is irrelevant. The majority of these illustrious women were nuns, but we also have the example of Visākhā, the devout daughter of a wealthy family, renowned for her integrity and her generosity to the Saṃgha. The poems of realization in the *Verses of Elder Nuns* are songs of liberation from the bondage of delusions, including delusions pertaining to gender, in which women triumph to become liberated saints (*arhatī*).

Portrayals of men in Buddhist literature are overwhelmingly positive. With the exception of Devadatta, the Buddha's jealous cousin who tries to kill him or displace him as head of the order, most representations of men and masculinity are glowing. As a study by John Powers (2009) documents, it was the beauty and power of the Buddha's perfect male body that captivated his audiences and attracted followers, seemingly more than his wisdom and compassion. The Buddha's mother is also described as having a perfect body, but her beauty was extremely transient, far eclipsed by her son's. In the Buddhist imagination, the image of perfect awakening is inevitably male.

GENDER IN BUDDHIST SOCIETIES

In theory, awakening has no gender, yet gender inequalities persist in Buddhist societies everywhere. To understand this paradox, it is useful to explore the notion of gender identity from both sociological and philosophical perspectives. What does it mean for women that the image of human perfection is male? If Buddha Śākyamuni clearly affirmed women's equal spiritual potential, why do even the early Buddhist texts include deprecating references to women? If liberation is a viable goal for all human beings without exception, why does gender discrimination persist in Buddhist societies around the world? A complex picture emerges of Buddhist traditions in which men hold most power and privilege, while women have enormous potential and play significant roles, yet are often thwarted by gender bias, even in fulfilling their spiritual aspirations. References to gender in Buddhist texts provide clues that help trace the origins of these paradoxes.

Buddhist texts are voluminous and varied – produced over the course of two and a half millennia in vastly different cultures and contexts. Buddhist followers are even more numerous and varied, espousing many different beliefs and perspectives. In addition, as post-colonialist feminist theorists have pointed out, the category "woman" obscures differences of race, class, ethnicity, age, and other aspects of identity and may also be a cause of suffering and discrimination. Although the categories "man" and "woman" serve a semantic purpose and indicate physical and social realities, the messages signaled by these socially constructed categories may differ markedly in the thinking and lived realities of human beings in diverse cultures and societies. The wide variety of Buddhist texts, beliefs, and practices makes an analysis of Buddhist views on gender quite challenging.

While there are many positive images of both women and men in Buddhist texts, there are many stereotypes and also some blatantly sexist passages. The *Kuṇāla Jātaka*, for example, is replete with slurs against women. Sexism is a persistent theme in the Jātakas, with some references less nuanced or ambiguous than others. Warning monks against the dangers of women may be considered a skillful means (*upāya*) of ensuring the monks' renunciant commitment, but it is unwarranted to portray all women as seducers of men. A clearer example of skillful means is the ploy the Buddha used with his half-brother Nanda, son of Mahāprajāpatī. As the story goes, Nanda became a monk and followed the Buddha shortly after his marriage to Janapada Kalyāṇī, but he longed for his former wife with such pathos that he was basically useless as a monk. Using his supernormal powers, the Buddha conveyed Nanda to Tāvatiṃsa Heaven and helped him overcome his attachment to his wife by demonstrating that she was grotesque as a monkey by comparison with the celestial nymphs. After his return, Nanda devoted himself to meditation in hopes of being reborn in this heaven and enjoying sensual pleasures with the nymphs but, as the Buddha had intended, as his meditative attainments advanced his sexual desire diminished. He became an arhat, and thus freed himself from any interest in worldly things. Again, although the ploy worked to ensure Nanda's renunciant commitment, it was at the expense of his wife, a woman. In interpreting these stories, it is important to remember that they belong to the realm of legend and are not historically verifiable, and that they reflect the prevailing views of women in sixth-century BCE India. Still, even if these Jātaka stories are not factual or canonical, they have still had an influence on attitudes and social values in Buddhist societies, especially in shaping attitudes toward gender, particularly attitudes toward women.

ORDINATION RITES AND RIGHTS

The ordination of Buddhist women began during the Buddha's lifetime, over 2,500 years ago, when Mahāprajāpatī was permitted to join the Saṃgha. The nuns' order flourished under Mahāprajāpatī's leadership and continued to exist in India for some 1,500 years. From India, King Aśoka's daughter Saṅghamitrā took the full ordination lineage for nuns to Sri Lanka in the fourth century BCE. In the fifth century CE, the Sri Lankan nun Devasara took the lineage to China, and from there it spread to Korea, Vietnam, and Taiwan. Tens of thousands of fully ordained nuns continue to practice in these countries even today.

As Buddhism spread throughout Asia, communities of fully ordained monks (*bhikṣu*) were established and thrived, but communities of nuns were not always established alongside them. For example, there is no conclusive evidence that the lineage of full ordination for women was successfully established in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, or countries in the Tibetan cultural sphere. The full ordination for nuns died out in India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka around the eleventh century CE, but has been reintroduced in the last twenty years with the help of nuns from Korea and Taiwan. A vibrant international movement to institute full ordination for women in all Buddhist societies is now underway (see Tsomo 2004).

The English terms "ordination" and "nun" are used for the sake of convenience, but they require explanation, since they derive from a Christian context and do not parse precisely with Buddhist monastic practice. A Buddhist nun or monk does not preside over sacraments and does not necessarily perform any ritual function. The first step in becoming a Buddhist nun (or monk) is the "going forth" (*pravrajyā*) or "leaving the household life." According to tradition, a nun subsequently receives the ten precepts of a novice (*śrāmaṇerikā*),[1] the precepts of a probationary nun (*śikṣamāṇā*), and eventually the more than 300 precepts of a fully ordained nun (*bhikṣuṇī*). The monastic precepts are organized into a number of categories, ranging from serious transgressions entailing expulsion from the order to seemingly minor infractions of behavioral protocol. To my mind, these precepts can be seen as belonging to three general types: (1) moral injunctions, such as refraining from lying, killing, stealing, or sexual activity; (2) regulations that facilitate harmony in the monastic community, such as refraining from accumulating unnecessary possessions, hiding others' belongings, or neglecting monastic property; and (3) rules of everyday behavior that are simply good manners, such as refraining from spitting, wearing the robes askew, or speaking with one's mouth full. There is a public relations aspect to this: monks and nuns are figures of respect, and so their comportment reflects on the integrity and reputation of the order.

A number of reasons can be cited for observing the precepts, among them: (1) the precepts support the practice of mindfulness and alertness in everyday actions; (2) they support the development of renunciation by limiting the number of possessions monastics may keep; (3) they prevent monastics from becoming overly involved in worldly affairs and thus limit distractions, allowing more time for mental development; (4) they help foster respect for others; (5) they provide a standard of deportment that inspires the respect and support of the lay community; and (6) the precepts encourage restraint of the senses, which is necessary for achieving liberation.

In the early years, *bhikṣuṇī*s lived a wandering lifestyle. Even today, the ordination rite begins with the formula of the four reliances: relying on alms for food, rags for clothing, trees for shelter, and cow dung and urine for medicine. Gradually, the Buddha agreed that the nuns and monks could accept invitations to meals, donations of robes, more permanent

shelter, and additional medicines. Owing to instances of sexual assault against nuns, the Buddha observed that it was not safe for them to take shelter in the forest and instead allowed them to stay in *vihāra*s (monastic dwellings) or temporarily with families. Over time, Buddhist nuns and monks began to settle into monastic communities, usually located near a town or village where they could go for their daily alms round. Today, most Buddhist nuns live in monasteries or retreat communities, while some live individually or in small groups and are active in society.

The rules and procedures that govern the lives of Buddhist monastics are contained in the *vinaya* (codes of monastic discipline). The official acts of the Saṃgha include three rites that are essential for Buddhist monastic life: (1) *upasampadā*, full ordination; (2) *upoṣadha*, the bimonthly recitation of the *Pratimokṣa Sūtra* that contains the monastic precepts; and (3) *pavāraṇā*, the assembly held at the end of the three-month rainy season retreat. The rite of full ordination for monks requires the presence of ten fully ordained precept masters (five in a remote area), whereas the rite of full ordination for nuns requires the presence of both ten fully ordained monks and ten fully ordained nun precept masters.[2]

The dual ordination procedure for nuns seems to derive from the eight weighty rules (*gurudharma*) that Mahāprajāpatī purportedly accepted in exchange for her admission to the monastic community. These vary in the different schools of monastic discipline and their historicity is anything but clear (see Kusuma 2000).[1] These rules stipulate the nuns' dependence upon the order of monks in such important matters as ordination, instruction, and reinstatement, despite the fact that nuns' communities generally function independently of monks' communities. The first weighty rule, which requires even the most senior *bhikṣuṇī* to bow to a brand-new *bhikṣu*, is particularly grating to the sensibilities of women raised with ideals of gender equity. Even if it could be established that Mahāprajāpatī agreed to abide by these rules, it is still not evident why all *bhikṣuṇī*s up to the present day should be obligated to follow them.

The rule that nuns must receive full ordination from both *bhikṣuṇī* and *bhikṣu* monastic communities means that women in countries where there are no *bhikṣuṇī*s are not able to receive the precepts in their own tradition. In the present era of improved communications and transportation, however, it is possible for nuns to receive ordination from *bhikṣuṇī*s of another lineage. *Bhikṣuṇī*s in Taiwan, Vietnam, and elsewhere welcome nuns from other countries and traditions who wish to receive full ordination and, since the ordination rites vary only slightly from one Vinaya tradition to another, there should be no problem. Monks in the Theravāda and Tibetan traditions who oppose the ordination raise qualms about whether the extant *bhikṣuṇī* lineage has been transmitted purely since the time of the Buddha until today and about the validity of conducting an ordination that combines more than one *Vinaya* lineage. These qualms are addressed in a pamphlet written by a committee appointed by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in 2005, which has concluded that the lineage is pure and that an ordination involving different *Vinaya* lineages is valid. Although a dual ordination may be ideal, and *bhikṣu*s who conduct an ordination without *bhikṣuṇī*s commit a slight transgression, *bhikṣu*s motivated by compassion should be courageous and compassionate enough to do so. As His Holiness said in 2007: "Actually, the Buddha himself already decided this issue. It is just up to us in those Buddhist countries without *bhikṣuṇī* ordination to find a way to introduce it" (Tenzin Gyatso, Dalai Lama XIV 2009: 272). Some believe that he should take steps to ordain *bhikṣuṇī*s on his own, rather than safeguard anachronistic monastic protocols, but until now he has continued to press for consensus among the Tibetan monastic patriarchy.

BUDDHIST WOMEN AND GENDER EQUITY

Today Buddhist nuns live in different countries throughout the world, attempting to abide by codes of monastic discipline formulated in ancient India, while simultaneously adapting to local etiquette and contemporary cultural mores. Even in the most traditional Buddhist setting, it is difficult for nuns today to live on alms food and adhere strictly to all the precepts. In modern times, especially for Western women, the lack of full ordination for women in certain Buddhist traditions is a glaring cultural discrepancy. Although today women's equal potentialities are recognized in virtually every field, male domination persists in Buddhist societies and is inscribed in monastic law. Age-old patriarchal patterns continue to be replicated in the Saṃgha, despite the fact that there is no philosophical justification for male dominance either in the Buddhist monastic community or other social institutions. With a new global ethic of respect for human rights, the legislation of subordinate status for any group of individuals must be seriously questioned.

Since 1987, Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women has campaigned continuously for gender equity, especially with respect to education and ordination. Inspired by Sakyadhita's biennial international conferences and grassroots social activism, Buddhist women have begun to work toward making full ordination available in all Buddhist traditions. The result has been a transnational movement of women traveling to different countries around the world to receive *bhikṣuṇī* ordination. As early as 1973, Jetsunma Tenzin Palmo, an English nun practicing in the Tibetan tradition, went to Mui Fat Monastery in Hong Kong to receive *bhikṣuṇī* ordination. The first breakthrough for Theravāda nuns came in 1988 when the Nepalese nun Dhammavati and two of her disciples received full *bhikṣuṇī* ordination in a ceremony conducted at Hsi Lai Temple in Los Angeles (LeVine and Gellner 2005: 76–85). The second breakthrough came in 1996 when Kusuma Devendra and nine nuns from Sri Lanka became *bhikṣuṇī*s at a ceremony conducted in Sarnath, India (De Silva 2004: 119–35; Li 2000: 168–98). Another twenty Sri Lankan nuns received full ordination in 1996 at a ceremony conducted in Bodhgaya, India. Since then, Sri Lankan *bhikṣu*s have presided over numerous full ordination ceremonies for hundreds of Sri Lankan nuns. Nuns from Burma, Indonesia, Thailand, and other countries have also been ordained in these ceremonies. *Bhikṣuṇī* ordinations are also being held in Australia, France, and the United States.

Progress toward achieving full ordination for women in the Tibetan tradition has been slow. Although quite a few nuns of the Tibetan tradition have received full ordination from other traditions, their ordination is not officially recognized by the Tibetan Buddhist authorities and these nuns have not been able to institute a *bhikṣuṇī* lineage within the Tibetan tradition as a whole. The Dalai Lama has repeatedly expressed his support for the full ordination for women, but states that such a decision must be made by a council of senior *bhikṣu*s and cannot be taken by him alone. He asked a group of Western *bhikṣuṇī*s practicing in the Tibetan tradition to form a committee to research ways to institute the *bhikṣuṇī* lineage and to answer the objections of those who oppose it. These nuns have traveled to Hong Kong, Korea, and Taiwan to receive full ordination, and through the Committee for Bhiksuni Ordination in the Tibetan Tradition are concerned to open up opportunities for nuns of the Tibetan tradition, who may find it difficult to travel to foreign countries.

The reluctance to institute *bhikṣuṇī* ordination in the Tibetan tradition revolves primarily around two issues. The first concerns the origins of the *bhikṣuṇī* lineage practiced in China,

Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam, and whether it has been transmitted uninterruptedly since the time of Mahāprajāpatī. This objection has now been resolved by producing a text that documents the unbroken continuity of the Chinese *bhikṣuṇī* lineage. The second issue concerns the method of conducting the full ordination in traditions that have no living *bhikṣuṇī* lineage. The Theravāda[3] and Tibetan Buddhist traditions have preserved the *bhikṣuṇī Vinaya* texts but have not had living *bhikṣuṇīs* in their own traditions to conduct ordinations. Therefore, the question is which method of conducting the *bhikṣuṇī* ordination is preferable and most likely to be considered valid: (1) by *bhikṣus* alone; (2) by *bhikṣus* and *bhikṣuṇīs* who all belong to the Chinese, Korean, or Vietnamese traditions; or (3) by *bhikṣus* and *bhikṣuṇīs* who belong to different Vinaya traditions (e.g., Tibetan *bhikṣuus* together with *bhikṣuṇīs* ordained in the Chinese, Korean, or Vietnamese traditions). The third procedure was used to restore the *bhikṣuṇī* monastic community in Sri Lanka, with subsequent ordinations conducted by Sri Lanka *bhikṣuṇīs* and *bhikṣuṇīs*.

Both Buddhists and feminists around the world have taken an active interest in finding an equitable solution to this dilemma. Buddhists often claim that women and men have equal opportunities to achieve liberation, but the lack of equal opportunities for women to receive full ordination contradicts this claim. As long as women in some Buddhist traditions lack access to full ordination, they lack the optimal conditions for fulfilling their ultimate potential. As long as Buddhist women anywhere are deprived, then all Buddhist women are deprived. To be consistent, then, Buddhists have no choice but to work for women's religious rights and gender equality – beginning with their own tradition.

TRANSFORMING ATTITUDES

Many of the performative aspects of Buddhism are individual and do not require institutions. In fact, it could be argued that all of Buddhist practice is ultimately individual, because the aim is transformation of the mind from its current deluded state to an ideal awakened state, and this can only be accomplished by the individual herself. It can even be argued that religious institutions need individuals, not the other way around. Without individuals, social and religious institutions serve little purpose. Viewed from this perspective, women are and always have been in a strong position, since they are fully capable of effectively engaging in individual practices designed to purify and transform the mind. If Buddhist institutions exclude them, women can practice in their own spaces on their own time, as countless women the world over have done for centuries and continue to do today. But effective individual practice requires qualified guidance and instruction, which are generally the purview of male monastic institutions. By not fully appreciating women's powerful potential, Buddhist institutions not only fail half of their constituents, but they also fail to optimize their own human resources. By ignoring or excluding women, they enforce and continually reinscribe the institutionalized inferiority of women.

The subordination of women in Buddhist monastic life, made explicit in the eight weighty rules, affects the status of women in Buddhist societies even today. Where Buddhist religious identity is strong and males dominate religious life, it can be argued that women's chances for awakening are diminished. Without access to full ordination, ordained women's access to resources, including food, healthcare, education, and opportunities for religious leadership are limited. Without equal access to resources and opportunities, it is not surprising that fewer women than men choose the religious life. With fewer career opportunities, women often find themselves on the lowest rungs of the social and economic

ladder. The prevalence of prostitution and sex trafficking in Thailand and Cambodia – countries where women are not admitted to the monastic community – are well documented. Blame for these problems cannot simply be laid at the feet of monasticism, despite the detrimental effects of the eight weighty rules. In countries like Japan and Mongolia, for example, where *vinaya*-style monasticism has been replaced by lay religious leadership, women do not necessarily have higher status.

For those who value the liberative potential of the Buddhist teachings, what are the options? To maintain the status quo and simply ignore gender inequity serves no one's interests, so it is time for an awakening to bring social realities in line with Buddhist egalitarian rhetoric. Buddhism offers ample resources for freeing oneself from selfishness and bias, generating compassion and loving kindness, and developing life-transforming insight. Buddhist societies are riddled with many of the same problems as other societies, but they also have the resources within their own wisdom traditions to understand these problems and make changes. A simple transformation of attitudes can optimize the liberative potential of all.

NOTES

1 The ten precepts of a novice Buddhist nun or monk are to abstain from: (1) taking life; (2) taking what is not given; (3) sexual intercourse; (4) lying; (5) taking intoxicants; (6) wearing ornaments or cosmetics; (7) singing or dancing; (8) sitting on high or luxurious seats or beds; (9) accepting gold or silver; and (10) taking untimely food.

2 Twelve *bhikṣuṇī* precepts masters are required in the Mūlasarvāstivāda tradition practiced by Tibetans. This prescription is found in both the Chinese and Tibetan translations of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *vinaya* texts.

3 The Theravāda tradition relies on the Pāli canon. Theravāda Buddhist countries include Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Theravāda communities are also found in Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, and Vietnam.

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

A HISTORY OF BUDDHIST RITUAL

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Todd Lewis

Buddhism is not a separate compartment of belief and practice, but a system of symbols, psychological attitudes, and ritual behavior forming the warp against which the woof of daily life is woven.

<div align="right">Manning Nash (1965: 104)</div>

Practices of the monks are so various and have increased so much that all of them cannot be recorded.

<div align="right">Faxian, Chinese pilgrim in India, 400 CE (Beal 1970: 1, xxx)</div>

INTRODUCTION

Many early scholars held that "true Buddhists" follow a rational, atheistic belief system, and that they focus almost exclusively on meditation, solely intent on nirvana realization; and that "popular" practices – especially rituals – represent a deformation of the Dharma (Buddha's teaching), an unfortunate concession to the masses. It is now clear that this is an absurd projection in the Western historical imagination, an assessment uninformed by textual evidence and anthropological studies.

Since householder traditions and non-virtuosi practices have not been central concerns in most research since the inception of modern Buddhist studies (Schopen 1991a), many texts concerned with nonelite belief and practices written in canonical languages, and especially ritual manuals, still remain largely unexplored. So, too, have anthropologists working in vernacular languages neglected the indigenous guidebooks that are in the hands of modern Buddhist monks and priests, the true "working texts" of living Buddhism. As a result, a proper documentary history of Buddhist ritual traditions, either in antiquity or today, simply cannot satisfactorily be written as of yet. To compose an overview of Buddhist ritual, one must rely on what little ritual literature has been translated, accounts by a few Chinese pilgrims who visited India from the fifth to seventh centuries, and then on the accounts about modern Buddhists in missionary and anthropological publications. These plus what has been published in local vernaculars and, more recently, posted on temple websites are the only sources.

There is, in fact, a vast inventory of Buddhist rituals known from the beginning of the tradition onward, as the quotation from the intrepid Faxian 法顯 (337–ca. 422 CE) reports

about India only 900 years after the death of the Buddha. And then what of the ritual traditions that were added to "the innumerable" practices over the past 1,600 years until now? For now, this chapter can only attempt a rough overview of the major areas of ritual observance, especially those founded in the past that continue until the present.

At the outset, it is necessary to articulate a social historian's model of Buddhism in which to locate its ritual history. This view of religion in practice must recognize: (1) the fact that monastics were a small minority in every known Buddhist society; (2) the reality that there is even a smaller number of individuals, past or present, whose adherence to the faith was primarily intellectual or philosophical; and that (3) throughout its history, the material support for this tradition was primarily in the hands of householders, whose contributions were essential for the existence of the tradition. It is the householder majority, then, for whom ritual activity, broadly defined, was their primary medium of "being Buddhist." Attending to these "facts on the ground" reveals that studying ritual involves examining the fundamental exchanges that sustained Buddhism as a living tradition. For it was these central, recurring, and satisfying human actions that could – and did – elicit the loyalty of householders for the past 2500 years.

THE TEXTUAL RATIONALES FOR BUDDHIST RITUAL

There is no shortage of early textual discourses that present both injunctions and rationales for "popular devotional activities." These are rituals that have from the beginning of the tradition made positive, meritorious contributions to those who follow the path and that serve to continually renew the foundations – material and metaphorical – of every Buddhist civilization. Thus, a set of key authoritative textual sources requires attention at the outset of this essay.

The Long Discourses (*Dīgha Nikāya*), part of the Basket of Discourses (Sutta Piṭaka) of the Pāli Canon, speaks of the devout Buddhist's duty "to help others in increasing faith, moral virtues, knowledge, charity" (N. Dutt 1945: 169); the Pāli "Discourse to Sigālovāda" (Sigālovāda Sutta) specifically enjoins every householder to "maintain … the traditions of family and lineage; make himself worthy of his heritage; and make offerings to the spirits of the departed" (de Bary 1972: 43). The third and most sustained text on Buddhist ritual is not one with which most students are familiar such as "the four noble truths"; to grasp Buddhist tradition with historical and sociological imagination, it is essential to be familiar with the text specifying "the four conditions" and the "four good deeds." These are found in the *Connected Discourses* (*Aṅguttara Nikāya*) of the Pāli Canon (IV, VII, 61ff.).

This text is not concerned with the 5 percent of the population who were in the monastic elite; in this teaching, Śākyamuni addresses the major concerns of the Buddhist householder's life, as he instructs the "good Buddhist" to seek the four conditions:

There are these four conditions which are desirable, dear, delightful, hard to win in the world. Which four? …

(1) Wealth being gotten by lawful means …
(2) Good reputations among kinsmen and teachers
(3) Long life and attaining a great age …

(4) When the body breaks up, on the other side of death may I attain happy birth, the heaven world! …

(Woodward 1992, II: 74, with numbers added)

How should this moral and Buddhist householder who has earned wealth then invest his time and money? Buddha next enjoins him to perform the four good deeds:

(1) [He] makes himself happy and cheerful; … he makes his mother and father, his children and wife, his servants and workmen, his friends and comrades cheerful and happy. …

(2) He makes himself secure against all possible misfortunes, such as by fire, water, the king, a robber, an ill-disposed person … so he takes steps for his defense and makes himself secure …

(3) He makes the five-fold offering (*bali*): to relatives, to guests, to hungry ghosts, to the king, and to the gods (*devatâ*) …

(4) He offers gifts to all such recluses and brahmins … who are bent on kindness and forbearance, who tame the one self, calm the one self … and for such gifts obtains the highest result, resulting in happiness [here] and [merit] leading to heaven.

(ibid., with numbers added: 75–76)

This passage ends with praise of one whose wealth has been used fittingly in these ways, who has rightly "seized the opportunity," and who has "turned wealth to merit."

The provisions and actions articulated in this canonical text are, in fact, remarkably congruent with modern anthropological accounts of Buddhist societies across Asia: householders still want such basic human blessings and seek similar spiritual goals. Then as now, rebirth in heaven is a "good Buddhist" aspiration; then as now, the Dharma taught by the Buddha speaks to the householder's situation: being a "good Buddhist" means fostering family ties, allows for "energetic striving" after economic success, justifies rightful seeking after worldly happiness and security, and underlines the virtue of being a donor and patron.

Contrary to those who hold idealized reductive views of what the Buddha actually taught, here the Great Teacher specifically applauds the religious virtues of faith and the legitimate aspiration of Buddhists seeking heaven; and this Pāli sermon is a decisive proof text that the Buddha not only believes in divinities: here he clearly *requires* householders to "do the good deed" of worshiping hungry ghosts and local gods. (On monastics being required to do the same, see below under "Mobile Image Rituals: Buddha Image Processions and Ratha Yātrās.") It was this pragmatic conception of householders following the Dharma, however nuanced in every local community, that shaped the successful domestication of Buddhism from Sri Lanka to the Himalayas, from Central Asia to Japan, over the past 2,500 years.

Thus, to focus solely on elite texts designated to guide the rare meditation master or philosopher is to miss the center of Buddhism in society. Instead, it is important to recognize three interlocking tracks of legitimate Buddhist religious activity, and the place of ritual in the Buddhist world:

Pragmatic wellbeing	Moral cultivation	Nirvana seeking
ritual/merit-making	merit-making	meditation
95% of population		5% of population

The first two ideals are sought through the work of ritual. Thus, a sound working definition of a "good Buddhist" is simple: one who takes the three refuges (reliance on the Buddha, Dharma, and Monastic Community) and who conducts the necessary ritual practices. And implicit in the performance of ritual is the systematic, lifelong garnering of merit, to which we now turn.

PUṆYA AND DĀNA: THE FUNDAMENTAL BUDDHIST EXCHANGE

The early and useful formulation for analyzing the tradition's own definition of a Buddhist community is called "the graded teaching" (*anupūrvīkathā*). It implies that the Buddha's Dharma assumed the inherent differences between individuals and that these are due to the fact that every person bears a different heritage of former acts, or karma. Since there is this natural scope of diversity in any Buddhist society, the compassionate spiritual guide must try to match the level of teaching with the disciple's capacity to understand and take action; this serves to foster progress in the long-term, multi-lifetime ultimate goal of nirvana-seeking. Hence, the *anupūrvīkathā* comprises a natural hierarchy of legitimate, progressive Buddhist practices, a kind of "syllabus" for systematically advancing in spiritual attainment. What does this say about what it is that "good Buddhists" should do? The progressive advancements on the path in the *anupūrvīkathā* go forward as follows:

1   *Dāna/puṇya* (gift giving/merit[-making])
2   *Śīla/svārga* (morality/heaven)
3   Evils of *pāpa/kāma* (immoral acts/pleasure seeking)
4   Value of renunciation
5   Four Noble Truths.

(Lamotte 1988: 77)

It is obvious again how gift giving/merit-making is the foundation for Buddhist practice; it is also clear that the performance of ritual is a necessary and expected practice for "good Buddhists."

As merit-making has provided the chief orientation point and goal in the Buddhist layman's worldview and ethos, gift-giving has always been the starting practice for accumulating merit, the lifelong measure and accumulation of spiritual advancement. Merit-making has been the universal, integrating transaction in Buddhist societies, regardless of whatever was the monastic intellectual elite's orientation toward various Theravāda, Mahāyāna, or Vajrayāna doctrinal formulations or spiritual disciplines.

Again, the wish for merit leading to better rebirth, even in heaven, was – and in practice, still is – the most popular and pan-Buddhist aspiration; indeed, a very often repeated responsibility spoken by the Buddha to monastics was for them "to show the laity the way to heaven." Merit accumulation is needed to reach heaven. It is true that Buddhist doctrine holds that heaven is a temporary state and that the faith's ultimate goal of *nirvāṇa* entails the individual's final, eternal cessation of karma. But the Buddha taught that in the long path through cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*), aspiration for heavenly rebirth, even if it is temporary like all other rebirths, had its legitimate place (and was infinitely better than rebirth in the multitude of hells).

Finally, the full sequence of the *anupūrvīkathā* together conveys why moral living (that avoids demerit and earns merit) and merit rituals (that can garner merit in large quantities)

figure so prominently in Buddhist life: it affects the natural law of karma acting on individual destiny that has both next-life effects as well as practical, this-world consequences (Obeyesekere 1968; Holt 2004). Here, it should be noted that even in the earliest texts, many Buddhists became monks or nuns for the great merit earned by doing so and because being "in the robes" opens many opportunities to earn merit, as is evident from the *anupūrvīkathā* list above. The same motivation holds true among monks and nuns entering the Saṃgha (monastic community) today.

The final canonical text to be cited provides perspective on Buddhist ritual; it has the Buddha explain exactly how to earn merit in the course of one's life for the purpose of spiritual advancement. Again given his propensity for lists, he enunciated the five cardinal precepts (*śikṣādāni*), and it is pertinent for all disciples, monastic and laity, on the path to nirvana.

1   *Śraddh*ā (faith)
2   *Śīla* (moral observances)
3   *Tyāga* (generosity)
4   *Śrūti* (listening)
5   *Prajñ*ā (insight)

(Lamotte 1988: 70)

Such texts were doubtless reference points as the autonomous *saṃgha*s spread across South Asia (and beyond), and they came to establish the features of Buddhism in practice in varying societies. Lacking a central institution that defined orthopraxy, the Buddhist communities designed and shaped a great variety of practices, customs, and possibilities. New ritual practices also come to be adopted up to the present, indicating the vitality of this need for merit, and the vitality of Buddhist communities in responding to their lived worlds.

How did Buddhists come to live according to these five cardinal precepts as the faith grew to be a regional, then global, world religion? By venerating images (fulfilling *śikṣādāni* 1); taking precepts and fasting (*śikṣādāni* 2); organizing compassionate actions and charitable institutions (*śikṣādāni* 2, 3); arranging public recitations of the texts (*śikṣādāni* 4); and encouraging meditation, the final stage and essential practice that cultivates the inner spiritual discernment of reality, *prajñā* (*śikṣādāni* 5).

But the most universal and typical expression of lay Buddhist faith and merit seeking has been through the rituals of gift-giving (*śikṣādāni* 3): feeding, clothing, and housing the Saṃgha; building shrines, funding charities, etc. Gift-giving's "investment" is described and celebrated in the *Birth Stories* (*Jātaka*) and *Legends* (*Avadāna*) literature as well as in the Mahāyāna discourses (*sūtra*). One twist in reckoning the merit earned is that the greater the spiritual standing of the recipient, the greater the karma reward to the donor. Generosity to all beings is applauded, although the best *"merit return"* accrues to gifts made to the buddhas, bodhisattvas ("buddhas-to-be"), and the Saṃgha. Mahāyāna texts agree in the primacy of gift-giving to the individual as an expression of compassion (*karuṇā*) and for its value as a renunciatory practice for the donor as well (Dayal 1932: 165–93). We now turn to the multitude of ways that Buddhists sought to fulfill these canonical ideals in their daily lives.

MAJOR BUDDHIST RITUAL TRADITIONS

It was for regularizing needed gift-giving presentations that monks and laity developed standard ritual procedures (*pūjā*) and calendrical norms, many that were already part of a

common Indic tradition based on the lunar calendar and the region's patterns of etiquette, purity, and pollution. Buddhist rituals evolved that complemented meditation and study; employing medical terms, specific rituals were seen as compassionate actions that could achieve specific beneficial results for suffering humanity. For the Mahāyāna devotee, *pūjā* was quintessentially an expression of skillful means (*upāya*), a disciplined act that aids the spiritual destiny of all beings, self and others. Masters in the Vajrayāna tradition, called *vajrācāryas*, developed a plethora of often-complex rituals, from tantric initiations to ceremonies designed to channel the powers of celestial Buddhas and bodhisattvas. A redefined fire ritual (homa) was part of this tradition, from India to Japan (Lewis and Bajracharya 2015).

THE MONTHLY CALENDAR FOR RITUALS AND THE INDIC *UPOSATHA*

Buddhist ritual life has always followed the phases of the lunar month. Based upon the lunar calendar, the two extreme phases of the moon's appearance were deemed observance (*uposatha*) *days*; the key *uposatha* day each month is the full moon (the twelve hours on both sides of the moon's peak fullness) that has always been singularly auspicious. The Buddhist year then is punctuated by twelve major holy days; in Sri Lanka, for example, every full moon in sequence is regarded as commemorating a key historical event in the life of the Buddha or in Sri Lankan Buddhist history.

First, *uposatha* days imposed a strict requirement on the monastic community, which had to join together for its own, private ritual recitations on these days, and then serve the needs of the community with sermons and consultation, all as specified in the monastic mode, or Vinaya. (Discussed in the next section.)

Emphasizing the fundamental interdependence between Saṃgha and lay community, householders were encouraged to visit their local monasteries (*vihāra*) on every *uposatha* day to make offerings to the Saṃgha and to the different sacred objects found there. (These are also enumerated below.)

On these days, devout lay folk (*upāsaka, upāsikā*) can take the opportunity to observe eight of the ten monastic rules while residing continuously on the monastery grounds. The usual lay precepts of no killing, lying, stealing, intoxicants are followed; the precept of no sexual misconduct is changed to abstinence; and three additional rules are followed, namely, not to participate in secular entertainments, not to wear perfumes, garlands, or fancy clothes, and finally not to eat after noon. Accordingly, these devout Buddhists wear plain white clothes and reside on monastery grounds continuously for twenty-four hours. The laity's frequent observance of fasting after midday (until the next morning) led to their being commonly referred to as "fasting days." Thus, the lunar fortnight rhythm has always dominated the Buddhist festival year.

The Buddhist calendar also regularly schedules the eighth lunar day (*aṣṭamī*) of each fortnight for rituals. In the classical period, *aṣṭamī* is also called a "fasting day" and this seems to have been the common lunar day chosen for to hold ritual and festival events outside the monasteries. For example, the bright *aṣṭamī* day of the month of Jyeṣṭhā is mentioned by Chinese pilgrim Faxian (in India and Lanka from 399–414 CE) as the day when a great Buddhist chariot festival was celebrated in Pāṭaliputra (Legge 1965: 79; N. Dutt 1977: 39). Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang 玄奘 (596–664; in India from 629 to 645), to cite another example, also records that there were three months each year – Phālguna, Āṣāḍha, Kārtika – when Buddhists observed special rituals and "long fasts" (Beal 1970: 1:180).

RITUALS OF BUDDHIST MONASTICISM

The Vinaya, the texts of monastic rules, regulations, and history, were at the center of the communal life in institutions created by the Buddha. The specific rules of residence in each monastery were copied and consulted regularly across Buddhist Asia. Communal life was based upon the proper ritual demeanors ordering the lunar-cycle-based monastic calendar; from the ordination hall to the latrine, from the wearing of robes to the hierarchy among monks, from settling disputes to expelling rule breakers, the monks and nuns were expected to live a disciplined life that was regularly punctuated by prescribed rituals. A detailed account of the ordination rituals that were normative across South Asia is found in Lopez 2004.

Each *saṃgha* in ancient India had its own autonomy, and in addition to the general guidelines of life in the Vinayas, there were also local monastic ordinances (*kriyākāra*) to which those monks wishing to live in any specific establishment also had to conform (Schopen 2002: 362).

It is also clear that monks were told by the Buddha in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya to do other rituals. One that was performed daily in most monasteries across Asia involved each monk setting aside a morsel of food for the *pretas*, hungry ghosts; these were typically collected by a serving monk, then deposited on a stone set close to the monastery boundary. Commonly found in the archaeological records of South Asia, such stones are a ubiquitous feature of Nepalese and East Asian monasteries up until today. Other ritual requirements recently brought to light were those that instructed monastics to recite verses for the monastery's tutelary guardian deity and another for a traveling monk to make a set recitation for the deity of any well or water source used in his travels (Schopen 2002: 380). Monks and nuns accepted boys and girls as temporary monastic residents to offer protection for families prone to their children dying (Schopen 2013). Proper funerals for departed monks and nuns were a special concern for the early Saṃgha (e.g. Schopen 1992).

RITUALS OF ORDINATION: NOVICE AND FULL MONASTIC VOWS

Elaborate rituals were developed by the community around the monastic initiations for novices (Skt. pravrajyā /ital/ Pāli *pabbajjā*) and full monks (*upasampadā*). In Theravāda contexts until today, families of the candidate arrange for elaborate fun-filled processions to the monastery, in imitation of Siddhārtha's life as a prince and his departure from householder life. Music, dancing, and merriment prevail. When the monastery boundary precincts are reached, the candidate gives away whatever wealth he has brought along, showering the audience with presents, from coins to sweets. Then with his closest family only, he enters the silent ordination hall of the monastery where, after making donations to the Saṃgha, he must go through an elaborate series of ritual steps, the first of which is having his head shaved (as he holds a tuft of his own hair as a reminder of impermanence). Before an assembly of at least ten ordained monks, he must then certify his eligibility for admission, be assigned a preceptor, don his monastic robe, and take possession of his begging bowl, after which he repeats each of the ten monastic precepts, as prompted by his preceptor. Only men of 20 years of age can be given the full ordination.

In East Asian traditions, the ordination rituals are similar, with local additions such as having smoldering incense applied to the ordinands' skin. Scars form, implying the ordained monk's or nun's lifelong commitment to the Saṃgha. The regional Mahāyāna interpretation

of the Vinaya has added other elements such as having candidates take bodhisattva vows (to help others reach emancipation) and adopt a purely vegetarian diet.

The lifelong expectation is not found in modern Theravāda traditions, where the custom of adolescent, premarital short-term monasticism evolved in Theravādin Burma (Spiro 1971), Thailand (Tambiah 1970), and modern Mahāyāna Nepal (Gellner 1992). In these places, "entering the robes" for most young men is more about merit-making for one's parents than genuine trial periods of monastic life.

FOR MONASTICS ONLY: *PRĀTIMOKṢA* RITUALS

Each fortnight on the new and full moon days, Indian saṃgha members were required to gather together at one time, without householders present, to recite the vows of "individual liberation" (*prātimokṣa*). This is a terse summary of the categories of monastic discipline regulations, and after each section's rules are repeated, the chanting pauses for each monastic present to affirm – by keeping silence – that all are in conformity with every major and minor rule. This recitation is held in the morning, after any infractions committed over the previous fortnight have been confessed (*ālocanā*) in private to the monk's superior beforehand. Thus, for the Saṃgha *Uposatha* became the regular ritual occasions to review, correct, and certify the proper standards of monastery discipline (Prebish 1975; Wijayaratna 1987).

MONASTIC RAIN RETREAT: *VARṢĀVĀSA*

In keeping with the monthly lunar cycle, the most prominent yearly Indian Buddhist monastic observance was the monsoon rain retreat called *varṣāvāsa* (Pāli: *vassa* or *vassāvāsa* [S. Dutt 1962: 54]). Dating from pre-Buddhist ascetics and adopted by Śākyamuni for his Saṃgha, the rain retreat practice, as required by the Monastic Discipline, was first marked by a ritual of commencement. For the next three months, it curtailed monks' mobility outside the monastery and encouraged meditation and study for its three-month duration (Wijayaratna 1990).

One ritual requirement incumbent on monks at the start of the rain retreat found in the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya (the "working text" for most Buddhist monks in northern India and, later, Tibet) was that monks must worship the Buddha as well as the monastery's local protective deity (Schopen 2002).

Among the largest donation events of the year, *varṣāvāsa* ritual ceremonies mark the beginning, formal ending (*pavāraṇā*), and new robe donations (*kaṭhina*) to monks who gather together for the retreat. The *pavāraṇā* ceremony is much like the biweekly *uposatha* for the monastic community; but for the lay community their emphasis is on a grander scale of merit-making, as the texts specify that gift-giving on this day is more fruitful than at other times (N. Dutt 1945: 249). *Kaṭhina*, the post-rain retreat presentation of new robes by the laity, likewise garners special karmic rewards, a tradition that endures across Theravāda Southeast Asia (Tambiah 1970: 154–60).

For historical reasons not yet understood, in East Asian Buddhist monasteries these Indian precedents were not widely followed. At most Chinese monasteries (where there was also no monsoon), there were no *uposatha* days. The only liturgical change on the first and fifteenth of the month was the addition of certain items to morning and evening ritual devotions. The summer monsoon retreat was also generally ignored, although some monks

were aware of it from their Vinaya study. Some individuals might choose to observe it as a special spiritual season, but in most institutions life continued as usual without the Indic practices. At many Chinese monasteries during these same summer months, however, it was customary to arrange for this summer period to be a time for study and for the abbot or other masters to expound the *sūtras.*

BUDDHIST RITUAL CHANTING

Buddhist chanting rituals link spoken words with simple deeds. The *paritta* texts of the Pāli Canon are one early manifestation (Skilling 1992). Monks chant one of eight recommended treatises while their senior monk pours water, symbolizing the blessing's dispersal. A thread linked to an image or water vessels is held by all in attendance; and at the conclusion of the chanting – so that can take a few minutes or days, or even weeks – the thread is rewound into a ball, then the monks tie pieces broken off to encircle the necks or wrists of those attending. The water that has now been infused with the Buddha's words is also used to lustrate individuals and sites, imparting protection and auspiciousness.

The earliest Mahāyāna ritual in this same mode is an elaboration of the bodhisattva's ritual service, emphasizing mastery of word chains known for their spiritual powers: *mantras* and (if longer) *dhāraṇīs.* These holy words, also part of the Dharma revealed by the Buddha, are found in the *rakṣā* literature (Skilling 1992). Their being given to the saṃgha to alleviate human suffering is conveyed in the stories that form part of these works. Mantras can be spoken to protect the speaker, the saṃgha, new shrines, as well as entire settlements and even countries. Resort to these formulas was one of the divisions in early Buddhist medicine (Zysk 1991: 66). This ritual chanting, which eventually included entire texts, was thought to further the foundations of spiritual practice; it was also done to generate good karma and radiant auspiciousness for towns and domiciles, especially at key moments of life cycle passage or crisis.

Ritual service came to dominate Mahāyāna Buddhism as it developed. This is clear in early East Asian Buddhist history, where cumulative *dhāraṇī* traditions were instrumental in the successful missionization of China when emperors, doubtful about Buddhism's place there, were converted as a result of the elaborate rituals performed by Buddhist monks to protect the realm, as well as the imperial family's well-being (Strickmann 1990; Copp 2014).

Myriad other Buddhist householder rituals evolved to organize the regular performance of such *mantra* recitations for households and communities across Asia. The mere presence of one of the most popular text of recitations, the *Pañcarakṣā* (Lewis 2000) was believed to provide protection for houses.

BUDDHIST FESTIVAL TRADITIONS

We now turn to the specific yearly observances that defined early Buddhism in practice. Like other great world religions, Buddhist cultures ordered and shaped time through regular monthly and yearly festivals. Some of these orchestrated the reliving of classical Buddhist events *in illo tempore* (Eliade 1957: 70). Celebrations of the Buddha's birth, awakening, and final liberation (*parinirvāṇa*) are universal, although their performance differs with regard to dates (Swearer 1995); other more regional sacred events likewise mark the year (Gombrich 1988), as different communities were free to assign their own definitions for these "auspicious days." These include Śākyamuni's ascent/descent from Tuṣita heaven to preach to his mother, or events marking a key point in the lives of bodhisattvas such as

Vessantara (Cone and Gombrich 1977), the Mahāyāna figure Avalokiteśvara, or the death anniversary of a local saint (Tambiah 1984; Strong 1992). More festivals will be cited in the sections below, as related to the timing of the rituals described.

Primary Constructions: Relic Stūpas

The Great Teacher's instructions on how to handle his body, cremation, and the resulting remains established the central tradition of Buddhist ritual. The Pāli *Discourse of the Great Final Liberation* (*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*) describes the first rituals devised to venerate Śākyamuni's cremation relics,

> The Mallas of Kushinara also brought water scented with all kinds of perfumes … surrounded the bones of the Exalted One in their council hall with a lattice work of spears, and with a rampart of bows … there for seven days they paid honor, and reverence, and respect, and homage to them with dance, and song, and music, and with garlands and perfumes.
>
> (T. Rhys-Davids 1969: 130–31)

Until the present day, Buddhist relics and stūpa*s* are venerated just so, amidst drumming and musical accompaniment.

Since then, the depositing of relics in circular mounds surmounted by a royal umbrella made the stūpa (or *caitya*) central focal point and the singular landmark denoting the tradition's physical presence. The Chinese pilgrim journals confirm what has been found in the archaeological record, that from the beginning stūpa construction and worship were carried out at the key venues in his religious career. The tradition eventually recognized a standard "Eight Great *Caityas*" for pilgrimage and veneration.

Worship at these monuments, as large as a hillock or as small as a backyard shrine, became the chief focus of Buddhist ritual activity linking veneration of the Buddha's "sacred traces" to an individual's attention to managing karma destiny and mundane well-being. The Chinese pilgrim Yijing 義淨 (635–713; in South Asia 673–687) noted the rich variety of forms these shrines had assumed a thousand years after the founder's death, with each made according to specific ritual tradition:

> The priests and laymen in India make *caitya*s or images with earth, or impress the Buddha's image on silk or paper, and worship it with offerings wherever they go. Sometimes they build *stūpas* of the Buddha by making a pile and surrounding it with bricks… . This is the reason why the *sūtras* praise in parables the merit of making images or *caitya*s as unspeakable … as limitless as the seven seas, and good rewards will last as long as the coming four births.
>
> (Takakasu 1982: 150–51)

The archaeological record shows that stūpas were frequently built in the center of monastery courtyards, often by monks themselves (Schopen 1989). Yijing's journal also notes that performance of stūpa ritual was at the center of the Saṃgha's communal life:

> In India priests perform the worship of a *caitya* and ordinary service late in the afternoon or at the evening twilight. All the assembled priests come out of the gate of their

monastery and walk three times around a *stūpa*, offering incense and flowers. They all kneel down, and one of them who sings well begins to chant hymns describing the virtues of the Great Teacher … [and] in succession returns to the place in the monastery where they usually assemble.

(Takakasu 1982: 152)

One final form of stūpa ritualism in ancient India had a votive-cum-mortuary aspect (Schopen 1987): Certain prominent Buddhists, including monastics (Schopen 1989), arranged to have their own cremation ashes deposited in small votive *caitya*s, often placed together and close to a larger Buddha relic stūpa (Schopen 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1991d, 1992). These structures seem to have been deployed as a means for perpetual merit generation for the deceased. In East Asia, monastic cemeteries still carry on this tradition.

Despite the many understandings Buddhists of every level of sophistication regarding stūpas, in practice all could nonetheless converge to mark events associated with the buddhas or saints. Stūpas thus became the natural sites for some of the other Buddhist festivals of remembrance and ritual veneration.

"Best of Constructions": Rituals of Monastery Building

A monastery (*vihāra*) can be of humble construction or built to imperial or aristocratic standards. Each must have a place for the monks to sleep and a site where those in residence gather for required rituals, and this must be marked ritually with boundary stones (*sīmā*). Only here can a legal ordination or *uposatha* confirmation that adheres to Vinaya ritual be held. A ceremony is essential for a patron to legally donate the land and its buildings, fittings, etc. to the *sangha*: holding a brick, the donor presents it to a representative of the *sangha* and pours water over it, ritually declaring his transferring ownership.

Some texts made quite specific recommendations to the laity regarding the best ritual donations yielding the highest merit return, and a monastery built according to these stipulations produces maximum reward. The Sanskrit text *Objects for Merit-Making* (*Puṇyakriyãvastu*), for example, arranges the following hierarchy of donations, tying securely the wish for individual good karma accounting with donations that establish the Saṃgha's material existence:

1   Donating land to the Saṃgha;
2   Building a monastery on it;
3   Furnishing it;
4   Allocating revenue for it;
5   Assisting strangers;
6   Tending the sick; and
7   In cold weather or famine, giving food to the Saṃgha.

(Lamotte 1988: 72)

All Buddhist lineages applaud the great merit accruing to those who build monasteries. Modern studies show that this view of monastery building exists right up to the present (Tambiah 1970: 147ff; Welch 1967). In antiquity as now, there are extensive ritual procedures for establishing the site and then erecting the various structures that can constitute the "monastery" such as dormitories, image halls, ordination halls, meditation

halls, refectories, stūpas, bodhi trees, and storage halls. Monks were appointed superintendents for this work (Schopen 2002). Here as in most other areas of Buddhist life after 600 CE, the Mahāyāna tradition developed much more detailed ritual procedures (Skorupski 2002; Tanemura 2004; von Rospatt 2010). Since not much is known about the actual monasteries that were built and the "working" ritual texts that actually guided the monk-superintendents, little more can definitively be said. What is certain is that for most monasteries, there was a yearly festival to celebrate its anniversary of dedication, and these "birthdays" were times when donor families did refurbish and clean it.

BUDDHA IMAGES: CONSTRUCTION AND VENERATION

The making of buddha shrines and images entailed rituals of proper construction, consecration, and upkeep (Lancaster 1974). Yijing describes the role of images in Buddhist practice, especially for those who are not advanced in their spiritual standing:

> There is no more reverent worship than that of the Three Jewels, and there is no higher road to perfect understanding than meditation on the Four Noble Truths. But the meaning of the Truths is so profound that it is a matter beyond the comprehension of vulgar minds, while the ablution of the Holy Image is practicable to all. Though the Great Teacher has entered Nirvana, yet his image exists, and we should worship it with zeal as though in his very presence. Those who constantly offer incense and flowers to it are enabled to purify their thoughts, and also those who perpetually bathe his image are enabled to overcome their sins … receive rewards, and those who advise others to perform it are doing good to themselves as well as to others.
>
> (Takakasu 1982: 147)

Such were the sentiments that by 700 CE legitimated the elaboration of Indian Buddhist ritual and festival traditions, and this historical observation is matched by texts such as the Mahāyāna *Entry into Bodhisattva Deeds* (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*) that laud precisely these activities.

An Indian "Bathing the Buddha Image" ritual commemorated Śākyamuni's birthday in the month *Vaiśākha.* As described in the *Nīlamata Purāṇa* written in Kashmir (800 CE):

> In the bright fortnight, the image of the Buddha is to be bathed with water containing all herbs, jewels, and scents and by uttering the words of the Buddha. The place is to be carefully besmeared with honey; the temple and stūpa must have frescoes, and there should be dancing and amusements.

This practice seems to have spread across all of Buddhist Asia. It is still popular today: on the festival day commemorating the Buddha's birth, an image of a "baby Buddha" is placed on a stand in a large, decorated basin; using a ladle, Buddhist householders, one after the other, draw water from another bowl (that also contains flowers) and lustrate the image. (They imitate birth accounts that have the Hindu gods doing so at the Buddha's birth in Lumbinī.)

Image *pūjā* ("ritual") at this and many other times was practiced by entire monasteries in conjunction with the lay community, by family members together in their own homes,

and by individual monks with their private icons. Some texts provided additional practices to accompany this action, such as the popular Mahāyāna *The Vow of Benevolent Conduct* (*Bhadracaripraṇidhāna*) that specifies "A Ritual in Seven Stages" to be done before a buddha image:

1   Honor the Buddha
2   Serve the Buddha
3   Confession of misdeeds
4   Delight in good actions of beings
5   Invitation of Buddhas to preach the Dharma
6   Arouse the thought of one's own future enlightenment
7   Dedication of merit to all beings

(Lamotte 1988: 433)

Here building on the first two practices that entail offerings and gestures of respect, merit-making is central to these and each other action. This sequence of ritual acts also incorporates practices that are thought to advance an individual's spiritual maturity that are typical of the Mahāyāna path to awakening and altruism to all beings.

Many Buddhist texts across Asia mention detailed procedures for image worship, beginning with rites of consecration, periodic image-bathing ceremonies with anointed water along with repainting and repolishing; and how the icon would then be reinstated in the temple, with offerings of incense and flowers, accompanied by music.

Yijing underlines the immense merit earned by Buddha rituals*:*

The washing of the holy image is a meritorious deed which leads to a meeting with the Buddha in every birth, and the offering of incense and flowers is a cause of riches and joy in every life to come. Do it yourself, and teach others to do the same, then you will gain immeasurable blessings.

(Takakasu 1982: 151–152)

A popular Khotanese Mahāyāna text concurs, stating that anyone who makes a buddha image is guaranteed rebirth in future world era of the next buddha Maitreya. Another passage in this text has the Buddha state that worshipping an image is equal in merit to venerating him in person: "Whoever in my presence should perform rituals, or whoever should produce faith equally before an image, equal will be his many, innumerable, great merits. There is really no difference between them." Thus, many Mahāyāna discourses, in agreement with the *Discourse of the Great Final Liberation*, laud as especially meritorious offerings of incense and flowers to buddha and bodhisattva images, all done with musical accompaniment (Emmerick 1968: 321).

Mobile Image Rituals: Buddha Image Processions and Ratha Yātrās

According to the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*, the tradition of buddha image processions began under monastic supervision. As Schopen has pointed out from his reading of this work (2005), definitive for north India Buddhist monasteries, monks themselves were encouraged by the Buddha to carry out, and to supervise the propriety of, various festival celebrations. One, called in this work *Mahāmahā* ("Great Festival") or "*Mahāpūjā*," entailed a procession of an

image of the bodhisattva Siddhārtha as he meditated under a tree as a youth. The Vinaya authorizes the making of the image in the monastic precincts, decorating it with silks and ornaments, and then building a fittingly decorated palanquin or wagon to carry it. Monks are told they must be in charge of the image throughout the festival, from when it "goes into town," to when it is taken "on a circuit of the region," and they are instructed that upon return to the monastery it should end with dignity. This Vinaya clarifies how the participants from "across the region" should be fed by the sponsor and how to collect the rather great largesse that is given, and accumulated, by those wishing to "have *darśan*" (view) and honor the image.

   Schopen (2005) refers above to the most extraordinary Indian form of buddha image veneration begun in late antiquity in numerous locations: the *ratha yātrā* ("chariot festival") and he has more recently (2014: 361–389) revealed textual evidence for *jāti maha* ("[Buddha's] birth festivals"), *stūpa maha* (dedicated to the Buddha and noted monks), an Indra *maha* honoring the conversion of the Vedic god, an *nāga maha* honoring the serpent deity converts Giri and Valguka, and, among others, a *cūḍā maha* ("[Buddha's] topknot festival"). Faxian noted that in ancient Pāṭaliputra there were images of buddhas and bodhisattvas placed on twenty four-wheeled, five-story *rathas* made of wood and bamboo. Beginning on an *aṣṭamī day* and continuing for two nights, the local merchants (*vaiśya*) made vast donations from specially erected dwellings along the path; in Khotan, too, there was a fourteen-day event that was attended by the entire city, for which each monastery constructed a different four-wheeled *ratha* (Legge 1965: 18–19). Nepal's surviving *ratha yātrās* focused on Avalokiteśvara have been documented (Locke 1980; Owens 1989).

MAHĀYĀNA TEXT FESTIVALS

Another Mahāyāna ritual focused on the "cult of the book" (Schopen 1975). According to the early *Perfection of Wisdom* (*Prajñāpāramitā*) texts, veneration of the Buddha's Dharma is vastly superior to worshipping his bodily relics. A section of the *Lotus of the True Doctrine* (*Saddharna-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*) describes how the most superior ritual act is one in which a Mahāyāna text is venerated, especially while being carried on devotees' heads (Hurvitz 1976: 82). This Indic custom also is still found in modern Nepal (Lewis 1993).

INDIAN MAHĀYĀNA *VRATA*S

Still surviving in the Himalayan region, Indic religious obligations (Skt. *vrata*; Tib. *nyungne)* are special Mahāyāna forms of Saṃgha-led, lay-sponsored ritual practice that focus on basic doctrines amidst devotional attention to a particular buddha or bodhisattva (Locke 1987; Lewis 1989). Doubtless originating in the lay wish to engage in spiritual practices on *uposatha* or *aṣṭamī* days, *vrata*s were the means by which groups could devote one or more days to fasting, making offerings, meditating, hearing stories, and maintaining a high state of ritual purity. Tradition specifies a series of boons for each type of observance*,* and the ritual texts promise huge infusions to one's stock of merit*.*

PILGRIMAGE

Travel to venerate stūpas, bodhi trees, and images in monasteries, especially those marking important events in the Buddha's life, also defined early Buddhist ritual practice (Lamotte 1988: 665). As the history of the great monarch Aśoka (ruled 273–232 BCE) indicates, this

was perhaps the very earliest Buddhist ritual, one that conceivably could have led to the need to elaborate other early ritual practices as sites developed, shrines were built, and offerings grew in number (Gokhale 1980; Schopen 2005).

By 400 CE if not earlier, Chinese accounts suggest that such meritorious veneration of the Buddha's "sacred traces" was organized into extended processional rituals. Such texts also promise the laity vast improvements in their karma destiny as well as mundane benefits as rewards for undertaking pilgrimage. The development of pilgrimage traditions shaped the early composition of site-coordinated biographies of Śākyamuni (Lamotte 1988: 669; Strong 2001); the needs of pilgrims likely pressed monks to compile some of the first *Birth Stories* and *Legends* collections. The Mahāyāna tradition in China likewise developed pilgrimage traditions focused on great mountains, where visions of and blessings from celestial bodhisattvas were possible (e.g., Naquin and Yu 1992). The most famous and earliest established was probably at Mount Wutai 五台山 in northern China. Pilgrims residing there sought spiritual connections to Mañjuśrī. What is remarkable is the recently discovered fact that by 700 CE, monks dwelling in northern India went off on this arduous pilgrimage to China seeking this blessing!

Many Mahāyāna sources assert that sites identified with bodhisattvas were also centers of pilgrimage. As one Khotanese text affirms, "Whatever Bodhisattvas for the sake of *bodhi* have performed difficult tasks such as giving, this place I worship" (Emmerick 1968: 163). It is noteworthy how every missionized region of Asia developed its own Buddhist overlay of pilgrimage involving mountains and sites for saint veneration, with monasteries built to "colonize" the sacred venues.

BUDDHIST RITUALS FOR ROYALTY AND PAÑCAVĀRṢIKA

For most of its history, the Buddhist Saṃgha has existed in polities ruled by kings or emperors (Gokhale 1966). As a result, the tradition developed an exchange rapprochement: The monastic community adopted no rules to break state law; it also certified the monarch's moral standing by accepting his patronage and bestowed prestigious titles (bodhisattva, *dharma rāja* ["just king"], *mahādānapati* ["lord of great generosity"], *cakravartin* ["wheel-turning spiritual leader"]) to those who were most exemplary.

The just king is the first among laymen, and King Aśoka was the paradigm for later rulers (Strong 1983; Reynolds 1972). The early texts also mention an extraordinary quiquennial festival that Aśoka performed and that expresses the fundamental exchanges within the Buddhist polity: "*pañcavārṣika*." It was a ritual orchestrating vast royal donations to the Saṃgha, other deserving ascetics, brahmans, and the destitute; it was also a time for displaying extraordinary images or renowned relics during festivities organized by kings and merchants, witnessed by a huge social gathering.

MERIT TRANSFER: RITUALS FOR PRETAS AND HELL-DWELLERS

From the earliest texts onward, Buddhist monks and laity have been instructed that merit is a kind of spiritual commodity Once it has been earned (from rituals or donations) it can be shared with other beings with a simple verbal pronouncement of sending. In almost every locale where Buddhism has existed, and as we have seen for Indic monastics, it is a custom to

put out food at special sites so that suffering hungry ghosts may find succor. Sharing merit also is nearly ubiquitous, whether it is to hungry ghosts, gods whose favor one wishes to attract, or to hell-dwellers whose time of intensive suffering can be lessened through these transfers. This became a major ritual practice across the schools of Chinese Buddhism (Teiser 1988).

DEATH RITUALS

In all Buddhist societies, death rituals are the purview of the monastic community. The funeral and mourning rites are a major time for monastics to expound on the Dharma and for the saṃgha to receive offerings, the merit of which is then transferred to the dead. Death is the critical time when an individual's karmic retribution plays out, and so the ritual traditions of assisting the dying to die in a peaceful state of mind and to make and get merit transferred to influence the ultimate rebirth destiny are the logical extensions of doctrine. In the tantric tradition, additional rites evolved to assist the dead in the "intermediate state" between births such as the Newar Buddhist tradition in Nepal that is associated with the *Elimination of All Evil Destinies Tantra* (*Durgatipariśodhana Tantra*) (Lewis 1994); the most famous such tradition known in the West is a late text, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Lopez 2011). In it, a tantric teacher (lama) offers advice to the disembodied individual's consciousness for seven weeks. Recent research and scholarly focus on this topic promises to clarify this large and ubiquitous area of Buddhist ritual activity (Cuevas and Stone 2011; Williams and Ladwig 2012).

VOTIVE AMULETS AND RITUALS

Anyone traveling to a society where Buddhism is a living tradition, and who visits a major shrine, will inevitably find items for sale that householders purchase and deploy for protection, be they items to hang from their car's rearview mirror, in the kitchen, or around their necks or wrists. Important treatments of this vital area of monastic production (creating and empowering) and householder activity (purchase and use) can be seen for Thai Buddhism in Tambiah (1984), and for Japanese Buddhism in Tanaka and Reader (2004).

The votive tradition is anything but a modern innovation, as it has ancient origins. Archaeologists working on ancient Indic Buddhist sites (e.g., Taddei 1970) have found thousands of clay and metal items that were certainly the correlate of modern amulets made of plastic and cloth. Pilgrimage centers of old and sites like Bodh Gayā where the Buddha was awakened clearly had merchants who sold clay replicas of the shrine for rank-and-file pilgrims, while the richer might purchase metal images. Buddhist texts like the *Pañcarakṣā* depict the Buddha praising and recommending amulets that tap the power of the Dharma (e.g. Lewis 2000). Whatever the medium, these were taken back home to become part of the family shrine or car, or worn to garner the protection of empowered sacra sanctioned by the earliest tradition.

NEW RITUALS

Just as the urge to make merit is integral to Buddhist life, and as the ethos of adapting the tradition to changing times and locations is strong, so do monastics and householders feel free to devise new practices for merit-making and protection. There are many examples of this across the Buddhist world today, from *boke fuji* ボケ封じ amulets introduced into Japan to combat senility, to the popularizing of "Bodhi Pūjā" (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988) in modern Sri Lanka. Once free to do so, Chinese Buddhists designed a host of new

Buddhist amulets for use in cars; in Nepal a new procession in connection with the *Collection of Names Tantra* (*Nāmasaṅghīti Tantra*) has been added in recent years to popularize a resurgence in this old meditation tradition dedicated to Mañjuśrī. The use of the Internet will doubtless reveal other innovations that take advantage of new technologies.

CONCLUSION

Whatever else we might surmise about Buddhism's vast and variegated history, it is clear that the tradition in every society ritualized spiritual ideals and incorporated pragmatic traditions into monastic iconography and ritualism, textual chanting, stūpa devotions, the festival year, and the life cycle rites of individuals. It is a universal phenomenon that all societies must train the young to perpetuate their cultural traditions. The success of Buddhism in reaching across Asia and beyond, in urban settings and villages, and among nomads conveys to the historian that this religion has effective means of conveying its doctrines and ideals through time.

One way of explaining this remarkable history is Buddhist ritual. In all its many variants, and in the hands of monastics free to improvise and who have been attuned to adapting the Dharma compassionately, ritual has always been at the center of Buddhist communities. It is an intervention that seeks to shape for the better the human experience, training in compassion, promoting generosity, imprinting a habit of analyzing the mind's tendencies, among many other goals. To use technical textual analytical vocabulary, rituals shape for the better (*kuśala*) an individual's *skandha*s (the five basic components of personhood): the physical body, sensations, perceptions, habit energies, and consciousness. So Buddhist ritual has been designed to shape consciously and beneficently the life experiences of its adherents; when vibrant, these practices ultimately pointed them away from suffering and toward advancement in spiritual maturity.

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MAGIC AND BUDDHISM

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Craig J. Reynolds

> Magic, by definition, is believed … Magic, like religion, is viewed as a totality; either you believe in it all, or you do not.
>
> <div align="right">Marcel Mauss, A General Theory of Magic (2010: 113)</div>

INTRODUCTION

Magic, defined here as certain beliefs and practices for mastering the physical world by appealing to supernatural forces, and religion, the pursuit of existential meaning, salvation, or awakening, do not sit easily together. As Mauss's words suggest, magic and religion are totalities. They may be, and often are, incompatible with one another. To achieve a desired result, a magician casts a spell, a priest offers a prayer, and a monk chants an invocation from the canon. People who believe in the effects of one of these utterances tend not to believe in the effects of the others. "Nobody seeks out a magician unless he believes in him," states Mauss emphatically (2010: 114). Even science could be said to be a belief system, but one that rests on *a posteriori* beliefs.

Magic has acquired an unfavorable valence in Western thought. Along with other religions, Christianity holds magic at bay on the grounds that its activities are fraudulent, demonic, or sorcerous. The Protestant reformers made magic out to be ineffective and a false religion. In a discussion of magic and Buddhism in English, the negative view of magic that derives from its entanglement with Christianity is useful to bear in mind when considering the other linguistic worlds that historically have been the home of Buddhism.

What is striking about magic in modern times is that Buddhist peoples around the world still give it credence, not everywhere, but in many places, and not only in rural societies. The early modern historian Keith Thomas wrote a famous book with a catchy title, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century England*, in which he argued that developments robbed older magical systems of their powers to satisfy the educated elite (Thomas 1971). But in the case of Buddhism, "the decline of magic" is an inappropriate phrase. Anthropologists and scholars of religious studies have been returning to magic as a concept and category in their efforts to understand religious practices in Asia that otherwise defy explanation (see the chapter by Garfield in this volume). Magic can be illuminating in understanding Buddhism even though it is a

troublesome word with a long history of conflicts and overlaps with science, religion, and the occult (Tambiah 1990).

MAGIC AND BUDDHISM

Magic and religion are not absolute or scientific categories capable of abstraction and rigid definition, but are concepts produced by specific historical conditions and cultures (Benavides 1997: 303). The boundary between religion and magic is never clear, and in some cultures the distinction between "magic" and "religion" does not even apply. When it comes to Buddhism, the boundary is especially blurred, because the Buddha himself possessed supranormal or *ṛddhi-bala* (Pāli *iddhi*) power. A Buddhist text states that "a bodhisattva can introduce Mt. Sumeru into a grain of mustard and the water of the four oceans into a single pore of his own skin" (Benavides 2006: 295–97). Other texts speak of the Buddha's potency or psychic powers. He could fly up into the sky, touch the sun with his hand, and make his body into many bodies. He could travel to other realms and converse with the deities there. He knew the thoughts of others and could recollect his previous births (Ray 1994: 51; Reynolds 2005: 218). His sexual prowess was such that he could satisfy 60,000 courtesans; his penis could extend from its sheath, wind around Mt. Sumeru seven times, and extend upward to the Brahmā heaven (Powers 2009: 13–14). Yet, while these extraordinary powers were attributed to him, he denied that he was a magician in any derogatory sense (Benavides 2006: 296). Given the shamanistic capability of travel to other worlds, he might also have denied that he was a shaman. Indeed, a secular definition of awakening (*bodhi*) – or enlightenment in some usages – is that it recognizes the attainment of supreme psychic knowledge. The supernatural powers of the Buddha and his disciple Maudgalyāyana are pervasive in the early literature because they facilitated conversion to the Buddha's teachings.

But the altered state of consciousness attained by shamans is the polar opposite of the awareness that is the paramount aim of a Theravāda Buddhist monk (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 44). The meditation techniques mentioned in the early scriptures focus on clarity and on fully understanding the nature of existence. Other kinds of psychic states, such as trance and possession, that have become more popular with the emergence of new, globalizing Buddhist movements, are also at odds with many teachings of the Buddha, yet these practices are commonly found in many Buddhist societies today. Spirit mediums and their disciples can have a very close relationship with Buddhism and occupy the same ritual space as monks.

The Buddha's rejection of a magical or shamanic identity suggests that even a religion that tolerates magic and magical practices conducted by monks or ex-monks maintains a distinction between legitimate and non-legitimate encounters with the supernatural. In the Buddha's time ordinary monks were dissuaded from speaking about the special powers they might have acquired and what they might be used for. The monastic ideal is withdrawal from the world and worldly occupations. Lay preoccupations and needs are another matter entirely, and must be acknowledged and met.

Magic and Buddhism, or magic and its relationship to any religion, cannot really be understood without taking account of the world that allows magic to exist, a world where a stone has generative properties or hilltops are the dwelling places of powerful spirits. Even in the Buddha's time there were stories of his encounters with supernatural creatures – *nāga*, *deva*, *yakṣa*, the god Indra – presented as a natural part of the human world. In many

of the discourses (*sutta*), these and other nonhuman beings are noted as members of the audience with no indication that this is unusual or problematic. In the second century BCE, the wording on the deposition of a relic of the Buddha suggests that "the relics were looked upon as living entities." The relics were alive (Schopen 1997: 126). Because of its antiquity and life-giving capacities, the earth itself is a source of special powers of protection and custodianship. The terrestrial realm is but a microcosm of a supramundane order that human beings can reach with the aid of ritual specialists who know the requisite codes and languages for communicating with this supramundane order (Swearer 2009: 84). All of this indicates that while the Buddha denied that he was a magician and rejected magic as a legitimate activity for monks, the way that this term is understood today differs from its associations during the Buddha's time.

Magic can work only if it is applied in societies inclined to give it credence. Ritual practices, beliefs, institutions, economies, geographies, and landscapes set the parameters that make magic believable. Ideas of power related to ancestor worship, healing rituals, and worship of village and mountain spirits were common currency in Southeast Asian religio-political landscapes irrespective of the transcultural religions practiced there – Buddhism, Islam, or Christianity (Ileto 1999: 194). Magic flourished in these landscapes, as it could and still does in other Buddhist cultures in Tibet, Sri Lanka, India, and China. In the early twentieth century Lama Alexandra David-Neel (1868–1969) evoked from her travels a convincing world of terrible demons, superhuman thought-forms, and prodigious feats of mastery over the natural world by powerful magicians (David-Neel 1965). Buddhism was widely associated with magical power throughout East Asia. In Japan the Buddha was viewed as a powerful deity (*kami* 神) from China. This assimilation to the indigenous Shintō religion facilitated Buddhism's reception in Japanese culture (Stone 1999: 165–66). New religious movements in Japan have their roots in the magical utopianism of Maitreya, the Buddha-to-be (Davis 1980: 85; 293–95).

The scientific rationalism that supposedly swept through late colonial Buddhist societies in Asia as a result of indigenous modernization movements did not overturn traditional belief systems in quite the way historians once thought it did. Indeed, an influential study of Theravāda Buddhism in Sri Lanka makes the point by stating that possession, firewalking, and self-inflicted harm, untraditional practices for Buddhists, signal the decline of rationality in modern Lankan religious life (Gombrich 1988: 203–5). The occult techniques that derived from South Asian Hinduism would seem to have no place in the beliefs of those who follow the Pāli canon, yet they have become popular among people who consider themselves devout Buddhists. "Superstition," a pejorative and anachronistic term in this field, was never completely excised by modernization movements. Buddhist intellectuals succeeded in adopting the language of scientific naturalism to describe their religion to the West as well as to their own nations. They made Buddhist belief entirely compatible with the scientific worldview (McMahan 2008: 63–67). The Dalai Lama, along with many Theravāda Buddhists, for example, characterizes Buddhist meditation as "mind science," as if meditation involves working in a laboratory and testing hypotheses (Tenzin Gyatso 2005).

But magic was not expunged, it was not demonized, and it was not fatally discredited. Modernity has not killed it. If anything, it has thrived and found new life with the help of new technologies and the power of mass marketing. The practices of magic and sorcery as well as the various sciences of prognostication are surviving the process of modernization. New historical circumstances are creating alternative modernities (Eves 2010). Whereas

divination was distinct from astrology in earlier times, today the older mentalities, now stripped of their former distinctions, are "happy to mingle their once quite separate logics" (Wood 2004: 231). As is the case in many other religious cultures, magic in Buddhist societies continues to be of use for living in today's world.

Understanding these alternative modernities in their local religious and spiritual landscapes requires a combination of "sympathy" toward unfamiliar faiths and practices as well as "distancing," so as not to place value judgments on practices and beliefs (Tambiah 1990: 3). Only in this way can another culture be translated into other languages.

PROTECTIVE POWER

One area where magic and Buddhism overlap is protection – physical protection against injury, ill-health, and natural disaster as well as custodial duties in keeping the individual or the community safe from harm. The spiritual and mental effects of epidemic and calamity also require their own special safeguards. Spirits – the embittered, hungry, or cruelly murdered dead – may not have received the homage due to them, or spirits dwelling in forests or rivers have had their realms disturbed by human activity. These spirits need to be placated or appeased. In Sri Lanka and other Buddhist countries spirit cults are entirely devoted to combatting misfortune and offering consolation to those affected by it (Ames 1964: 47). Spirits residing on hilltops or mountain peaks and in water courses draw their power from the landscape and the energies of the earth, power that can be harnessed or canalized to protect human beings.

In a formal Buddhist setting, monks recite two kinds of invocation, *paritta* and *rakkha*, for protection (see the chapter by Lewis on ritual in this volume). The *paritta* recitations, which are restricted to the Pāli tradition, keep a person safe from evil spells, weapons such as knives and guns, betrayal, fire and poison, and comprise a distinct genre of Buddhist literature. In effect, the monks in these recitations are preaching to the spirits to warn them and to convert them to the way of the Buddha (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 19). A regular practice wherever Theravādin Buddhism has been established, *paritta* recitations are effective because of the sounds uttered in the chanting, less so for the meaning of words that often has nothing to do with a role in ritual (McDaniel 2004). Tambiah reported from his field research in Thailand that audience interest and concentration were partial if not minimal, with much murmuring and sleeping throughout the proceedings (Tambiah 1970: 195). The performance of the recitation is the key to its effectiveness rather than its reception and internalization by the listener.

The use of these texts dates from the earliest *sutta*s, chronicles, and commentaries in the Buddha's time, with lists of *paritta* titles to be found in the *Questions of Milinda* (*Milinda-pañha*), a composite text that dates from the middle of the second century BCE to the fifth century CE. Burma, Siam, and Sri Lanka have parallel *paritta* traditions (Skilling 1992: 116–17, 120). Piyadassi Thera (1914–98), a noted Sri Lankan monk, has offered a modern interpretation of *paritta*, explaining that recital of the texts produces in those who hear it mental well-being, the power of love, and a virtuous state of mind. Yet popular belief holds that reciting the texts is not just rewarding for mental strength but is efficacious in curing illness and keeping spirits at bay (Swearer 2009: 28–29). The *pañcarakṣā* is another genre of protective texts devoted to the five goddesses popular in northern India, Nepal, and Tibet. *Rakṣā* are a class of demons that are believed to cause misfortune to humans and their crops and livestock.

The texts in the *rakṣā* genre, pan-Indian as well as pan-Buddhist, are recited in the Mahāyāna tradition to invoke protection against disease, disaster, and malignant spirits and to avert misfortune. For centuries after it was brought to Japan, Buddhism was mainly associated with protection of the country. The government built temples at strategic points and required monks to chant sūtras associated with border protection. One type of *rakṣa* spell (*mantra*) is recited specifically for worldly or mundane ends, such as warding off calamity or to promote physical well-being and welfare (Skilling 1992: 110). The mantras, which are not found in the canon of the Theravādins, have both intelligible as well as unintelligible elements, phrases that are not arbitrary but are necessary for the efficacy of the mantra.

Rakṣa can be written down on paper or cloth and deposited in stūpas, tied to banners carried by soldiers in battle, or rolled up, encased, and worn as amulets (Skilling 1992: 167). These items provide bodily protection for the individual who has invested the time and money for the protective properties of the object once it has been charged by the religious specialist. Men who go to war, hunters in the jungles and forests, and people in life-threatening occupations want the benefits of these protective devices. In the absence of an amulet, a mantra honoring a famous Buddhist saint such as Upagupta may be recited to thwart harm (Strong 1992: 278). Meditation practice also has protective power. Forest-dwelling monks in northeastern Thailand help villagers overcome their fears of spirits or ghosts by teaching meditation that gives the villagers confidence in their own spiritual powers (Kamala 1997: 209). Tattoos on young men, etched by monks who have the requisite skill and knowledge, have protective and beneficial effect (Terwiel 1975: 83–95).

In Buddhist Southeast Asia, police and soldiers wear amulets to give them invulnerability against the weapons used by their adversaries and enemies. Knives and spears were the weapons to fear in former times; nowadays the amulets provide protection against bullets. The amulets may be small Buddha images or votive tablets, Bodhisatta images or mythological creatures, magical diagrams or inscriptions, or miniature weapons. These objects, which carry signs of the supernatural, can protect the national body as well as that of the individual. The government of a nation-state may deploy them to protect the commonweal. If the object in the amulet is an image, it can be molded from a mixture of ash, relics of a Buddhist saint, dried medicinal herbs, metals, and ground-up roof tiles from a famous monastery (McDaniel 2011: 54–56; 201–3). In the early 1920s a famous Thai policeman, Khun Phantharakratchadet (1898–2006), underwent a ritual conducted by monks in a cave monastery in southern Thailand that involved ingestion of black sesame oil and immersion for two weeks in an herbal bath that prevented illness and toughened his skin against penetration by sharp weapons and bullets. The policeman had an event-filled life, captured many bandits and criminals in the national police service, and lived to the ripe old age of 108, the most auspicious number in Buddhist mythology. At the end of his life he was instrumental in the consecration of a new amulet. Because of the policeman's reputation, demand for the amulet increased exponentially as it quickly became a collector's item. Its value skyrocketed until the bubble burst and the market for it plummeted, causing financial ruin for those who went into debt to invest in its special powers of attraction and protection (Reynolds 2011).

The struggle between good and evil is dramatized in an episode in the Buddha's life when he defeated Māra, the lord of misfortune and the personification of evil and death. When Māra tried to disrupt the Buddha's meditation, the earth goddess answered the Buddha's summons by wringing out her hair and causing a flood that swept away Māra's army (Reynolds 2005: 213). This episode highlights the Buddha's ability to vanquish

enemies, to be victorious over evil objectified in beings or things, so it is understandable that warriors should want to avail themselves of these powers of the Buddha. Among the Thai volunteer force dispatched to fight in the Second Indochina War alongside the Americans and the southern Vietnamese in the late 1960s, the trade in amulets and talismans was vigorous. A taboo grew up around killing Vietnamese barking deer thought to be conduits to powerful spiritual forces that could harm the Thai soldiers if not treated compassionately. Fighting took place on the metaphysical as well as the physical landscapes of South Vietnam (Ruth 2011: 180–212).

There is an additional dimension to the popularity of amulets among soldiers and police. Some amulets are like magnets, endowed with the power to attract money, good fortune, supporters and loyalists, and women. Amulets are worn as evidence of male honor and dignity. They can make a man attractive and give him charm and appeal, erotic and otherwise. In Thai this quality of the amulet is called *mettamahaniyom*, the power to pull or attract. Powers of invulnerability also have a coercive aspect in that they can make a man feared as well as attractive (Turton 1991: 170). Certain amulets have the power to mobilize people and are thus signs of a leader's ability to build entourages and constituencies. Useful in politics, a rare and expensive amulet testifies to a leader's ability to attract loyal followers and to a modern politician's power to amass electoral support.

While a monk's vocation forbids him from assuming nonreligious roles and from harming others, monks in parts of the Buddhist world such as Sri Lanka are known to practice exorcisms and spirit possession. The latter is surprising, because a state of trance is the polar opposite of the awareness that leads step by step to the awakening that is the primary goal of the Buddha's teaching (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 43–44). Yet monks may assist in rituals of trance and may attend the medium's ceremonies, as in Cambodia (Bertrand 2004). In Sri Lanka the deity Hūniyam, who personifies black magic (and whose name means Black Magic), has risen up the scale to become a kind of godling. He has an ambiguous status as both demon and protective deity who may be invoked to counter the sorcery that people living around Colombo believe may be directed at them (Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 115–28). Black magic in this religious context is an explanation for any kind of misfortune. Practicing black magic – or sorcery as it is called by some scholars – turns the tables to right a wrong or to hit back at an injustice in a situation where legal redress is inadvisable or impossible. Sorcery is closely tied to practices in popular Buddhism in Sri Lanka where it is protective and destructive (Kapferer 2002). In contrast to the moral strictures of Buddhism, the darker side of witchcraft and sorcery in Buddhist societies can be decidedly malevolent and death-dealing. In Thai language this darker side is called black magic, literally black mantra (*mon dam*). Indologists writing about religion in medieval India have rediscovered a movement in the sixth to the twelfth centuries of secret spells, coded language, and radical meditational techniques. This tradition has been termed esoteric Buddhism, a label that signals its marginal and vaguely illegitimate status (Davidson 2002). Spawned in the middle of the seventh to eighth centuries at a time of conflict and social upheaval, tantric Buddhism exploited fierce and terrible aspects of human experience and by means of rituals and spells put them in the service of rulers (Powers 2009: chap. 7)

SCIENCES OF PROGNOSTICATION

In Buddhist Asia from ancient times, people ordered their lives, the architecture of their temples, and the design of their cities on the basis of cosmic principles. Planners created a

terrestrial realm to correspond to an imagined cosmic one by asserting an isomorphism between kingdom and universe. This parallelism of earth and cosmos was asserted by belief systems in Indic, Southeast Asian, and East Asian cultures that were fortified by older belief systems. The ancient Burmese capital at Pagan was located only thirty miles from Mount Popa, the home of the most powerful guardian deities, the Mahagiri *nat*s, suggesting that the Indic symbolism of Mt. Meru thrived in Southeast Asia because it drew on an ancient local cult of mountain spirits. Japan and China, deeply influenced by Buddhism from the sixth century CE, were no exception in fashioning this parallelism (Davis 1980: 34–36). By means of ritual, urban and architectural design, and semiotic wizardry, human action could be tuned to the dynamics of an external order: the movements of the planets; the hidden forces of nature; the metaphysical laws of the universe; and the powers latent in the conjunction of time and place. Although commonly associated with rural society, this world, which could be interpreted and manipulated by means of what we might call applied sciences of prognostication, was also inhabited by the elite.

Apart from providing a mechanism for linking the terrestrial and cosmic realms, the sciences of prognostication function at a personal level by helping people make decisions. They enable people to face the uncertainty and unpredictability of life, to deal with the risk of misfortune, injury, or death; and to anticipate an outcome, be it auspicious or otherwise. People look forward as well as backward. They make plans. They make decisions about the next day or the next week. They assess risks and opportunities in personal relationships and in everyday life, and in business and the workplace. They dream of success and strive to gain every advantage in achieving it. They abhor failure and calculate odds in order to avoid it. We venture here into the realm of the unforeseen in order to ascertain the measures that people take to weigh up and calculate possibilities in deciding on a future course of action.

The Scripture about Auspicious Things (Pāli *Maṅgala-sutta*) is a text found in many of the canons within Theravāda Buddhism. Consisting of only twelve verses, it is one of the most influential texts in the Theravāda world, from Sri Lanka to Southeast Asia, and it is sometimes recited during the protective rituals performed by monks to ward off misfortune (Hallisey 1995). The keyword here is auspicious (*maṅgala*), a concept found in many Indic religions, including Hinduism and Jainism. Some possible translations of this difficult word are luck, fortune, happiness, prosperity, welfare, auspiciousness, good omen, lucky object, amulet, and festival (Hallisey 1995: 413). The introduction to the text explains that a long discussion had taken place among gods and humans about what *maṅgala* means, a discussion that connects with the audience by mentioning various types of good and bad omens. The subtext here is that *The Scripture about Auspicious Things* implicitly recognizes the diversity of local contexts and traditions in which Buddhism took root. It also recognizes what Hallisey calls "shadows" of a harsh world of agricultural labor and hard work in the largely peasant societies where Theravāda Buddhism had thrived for a long time (Hallisey 1995: 414).

The sciences of prognostication – *inter alia* divining, numerology, astrology, palmistry, and the interpretation of dreams and signs on the body such as moles – are deployed to help people face up to unpredictability in life. It is important to distinguish between risk, referring to "random situations in which the underlying probabilities are fully known," and uncertainty, referring to "all other random situations, in which knowledge of the probabilities is less than complete" (Clark 1990: 48). Peasant choice, which the research on risk in agricultural societies often examines, illustrates the reasons why people reach out to these sciences. The research suggests that what people maximize in their decision-making is not

always cash or output. There may be other goals that may be more important to them – pleasing someone, for example, or demonstrating loyalty, or helping out a friend (Ortiz 1980: 193). In order to deal with risks and uncertainties, people may introduce information into their decision-making that could be regarded as nonrational or, in the context of this discussion, magical. The selection of this information is not haphazard, however, but is based on a personal connection determined by the numerological or semiotic link between the decision-maker and the desired outcome. The numbers to be purchased in a lottery, the color to wear on a particular occasion, the day of the week on which to do a particular thing, or the person chosen as a spouse or lover – all these decisions are made on the basis of the personal information derived from astrological conjunctures. In Thailand and other Buddhist countries, handbooks – nowadays published but formerly transmitted through a line of consultant teachers – contain detailed information that allows people to determine when harmonious conjunctures will occur and what numbers, colors, or days of the week are associated with a particular activity. In agricultural societies this information is critical for planting and harvesting crops (Farrelly et al. 2011: 245).

Some sociologists identify modernity as an outlook based on assessment of risk, and pre-modernity as one based on fate or predestination, but the persistence of certain practices such as the sciences of prognostication in societies that in other respects seem to be modern suggests that these practices should be viewed as alternative ways of assessing risk. These practices do not disqualify a society from being modern (Malaby 1999: 143). However calculated, auspicious and inauspicious times still retain a hold on the way many people in Buddhist societies make decisions and order their lives. The sophisticated methods of time-keeping in today's world simply offer a more precise way of determining the conjunctions of time and place favorable to a particular outcome.

Divination, for example, is a semiotic science of reading signs that is not so much about predicting the future as about making decisions that lead to favorable outcomes. Divination outlines options and reduces the risk inherent in unfavorable conjunctions of time and place. Astrology, still one of the most popular sciences of prognostication, produces an algorithm that calculates one's fate, a neutral term here having neither a negative nor a positive valence. Astrology is also associated with monks in Tibet, where divination is practiced through the use of spirit mediums fully integrated into Buddhist belief and practice (Samuel 1993: 194–95). To say that "astrology is a pseudo-science traditionally of great importance in Indian culture" misses the point about its efficacy and utility for individual life choices (Gombrich 1988: 205). It is a particular body of knowledge that compels belief among those reassured by its infinitely complex yet precise conjunctures. In the nineteenth century the reforming Sinhalese scholar-monk Hikkaḍuve Sumaṅgala (1827–1911), having established a reputation for astrological knowledge early in his career, called for restoration of the traditional South Asian sciences related to language, literature, medicine, and protective technologies (Blackburn 2010: 38–41). Palmistry, the various methods of numerology, the interpretation of dreams and marks on the body such as moles and freckles, or even interpreting the landscape, what Chinese geomancy calls *feng shui* 風水, are all forms of divination of one kind or another. They allow people to prepare for what lies ahead and to have the confidence to face whatever an uncertain future has in store for them. They also assert basic principles about the importance of maintaining equilibrium and establishing harmony with nature (Terzani 1998: 73, 94, 225).

Gambling, the lottery, and informal credit schemes are popular activities in which specific numbers spell the difference between winning and losing. In Burma monks in their

quest for sainthood are believed to acquire special powers through the practice of meditation. Among these powers is the ability to foretell the future or to receive premonitions about future events, and forest monks are particularly adept in these premonitions because of the conditions in remote areas where they can intensify their concentration. Some monks have dreams or visions during their meditations (Rozenberg 2010: 82–83).

Astrology, numerology, and other sciences of prognostication, even when practiced by monks or ex-monks, tend to be compartmentalized in much scholarly literature and set apart from Buddhism. In fact, there is much in Buddhist teaching and in Buddhist texts such as *The Scripture about Auspicious Things* that parallels these applied sciences and fortifies the faith Buddhist peoples place in them. Monks achieve in their advanced meditative states the ability to interpret omens and to extract premonitions from the psychic experience. The results of the applied sciences are sufficiently rewarding that many Buddhist people invest time and resources for the confidence they gain in exchange. After initial skepticism, efficacious outcomes from employing a combination of magical ritual and modern science confirm the validity of both types of knowledge.

PRACTITIONERS

One of the difficulties in navigating along the fuzzy border between magic and religion in Buddhist societies is identifying or even defining "magician." What makes the situation complex and an interesting intellectual problem is that Buddhism in Asian societies from early times has recognized two distinct but related competencies: clerical, scriptural, and academic knowledge; and special powers in healing both physical and mental, and in exercising supranormal control over the physical world. These two competencies may even form separate traditions within the one society, such as in Tibet where clerical Buddhism and shamanic Buddhism exist side by side (Samuel 1993: 3–23). One of the lama's functions is taming and subduing malevolent and destructive powers (Samuel 2005: 182). The shamanic or magical competency offers control over practical matters and problems of everyday life. In the Khmer Theravāda tradition, according to one interpretation, there is a right-hand (soteriology) and left-hand (worldly) path of these two orientations, a distinction reminiscent of the Hindu tantra (Crosby 2000: 162–63). The people who hold these different competencies may be monks, ex-monks, or lay persons. The competencies may be specialized in different individuals or, as is commonly the case in Tibet, a single individual may possess both kinds. Scholastic competency enhances the charisma of the lama and empowers him or her to exert control over the physical world. In some traditions, practitioners are believed to be capable of communicating with alternative modes of reality.

One aspect in Buddhism's history that enables or facilitates belief in supranormal powers by Buddhist devotees is the tradition of saints, Upagupta among them. These saints, or *siddha*, possess magical faculties. They can know the minds of others, they have divine hearing, they can recollect their past lives, and they have superhuman physical abilities known as *iddhi* (e.g., flying and walking; Ray 1994: 90). In a strictly Buddhist interpretation of the texts, these powers are not so much supranormal as by-products of the mastery of laws of mind and world. The special powers are "kinds of success," which is what a literal translation of the Pāli term *iddhi-vidhā* implies (Tambiah 1984: 45). Davidson identifies the *siddha* as belonging to noninstitutional Buddhist esoterism in the first decades of the eighth century, when they have strong continuities with the archetype of the sorcerer (Davidson

2002: chap. 5). Institutional or noninstitutional, the *siddha* and the *arhat/arahant* possess exemplary attainments to which mortal monks may aspire.

Some Buddhist cultures have developed the shamanistic competency in a more specialized way than others. Such is the case in Burma, where the list of specialists in the occult is especially long (Spiro 1978: 148). Shamans, who are predominantly women, may be oracles, mediums, diviners, cult officiants, or clairvoyants. Almost all Burmese villages have shamans who may also treat illnesses both physical and mental (Spiro 1978: chap. 12). Also in Burma we find *weikza* (from Pāli *vijjā*, knowledge), a kind of "superman," who is a sorcerer or knower of charms (Rozenberg 2010: 46–47). The unusual powers of the *weikza* are acquired through meditation and mastery of the sciences of prognostication (divining, astrology, alchemy, charms, and talismans), but this mastery is "directly proportional to one's progress in becoming a good Buddhist" (Ferguson and Mendelson 1981: 63). It is arguable whether the *weikza* belong in the Theravāda Buddhist tradition or in indigenous animism, but the Buddhist iconography and mythology associated with the Metteyya Buddha and the participation of Buddhist monks in the rituals would seem to place it well within the Buddhist tradition (Mendelson 1961). Some revisionist research underway on this topic continues to assign these practitioners either to the clerical or the shamanistic competency, the sacred or the mundane pole. It is also the case that a practitioner may be Janus-faced, presenting one or the other competency depending on what the devotee or client is expecting or requires.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Human existence is precarious and perilous. Danger and uncertainty are ever present, and no one, however high-born or affluent, is immune from a sudden turn of fortune. Floods, fire, and drought affect urbanites as much as rural dwellers. The ordinary as well as the hazardous conditions in which people find themselves require that all available resources – spiritual and psychic as well as scientific and technological – be deployed to confront the problems that arise from the unpredictability of living in the world.

To understand how Buddhist peoples confront uncertainty, risk, and misfortune in their lives, this discussion has explored the grey area between magic and Buddhism. The conventional comment about Buddhism is that it has nothing to say about mundane matters and that the world and its affairs have little to do with the saving knowledge the Buddha taught (Spiro 1978: 271). Yet various magical practices have identifiable parallels in early Buddhist texts, teachings, and rituals, however much modern orthodox Buddhist practice and belief may marginalize magic for its worldliness and preoccupation with the mundane. Magic, or what may be termed magic (or the supranormal or the supernatural), is an antidote to misfortune. For Buddhists, as for peoples in other cultures, magical practices and beliefs are manifestations of an everyday, pragmatic philosophy for living (Whyte 1997: 18–21). In this context, Malinowski's (1954: 90) ideas are pertinent. Magic supplies man

> with a number of ready-made ritual acts and beliefs, with a definite mental and practical technique which serves to bridge over the dangerous gaps in every important pursuit or critical situation. It enables man to carry out with confidence his important tasks, to maintain his poise and his mental integrity in fits of anger, in the throes of hate, of unrequited love, of despair and anxiety. The function of magic is to ritualize man's optimism, to enhance his faith in the victory of hope over fear.

"Man" for Malinowski was "primitive man," but the examples I have given here are very much modern ones. Magic and the sciences of protection and prognostication are as much about bolstering confidence and maintaining optimism as they are about thwarting evil, and they are widely in use in Buddhist societies today in urban as well as in rural settings. Magic, like religion, belongs to the psychosocial dimension of human experience. It treats of the emotions and humanity's expressive needs rather than the rational faculties, which is not to say that it is irrational. Its rules and procedures – sometimes systemic and sometimes improvised or subject to infinite modification and adjustment – have an integrity all their own. People may have absolute faith in the magical powers of lamas or monks, or they may purchase a talisman or amulet "just in case," paying a modest price for a decorative, intriguing object that just might avert disaster or win rewards.

Buddhism's teachings aim at recognizing and transcending *māyā*, the illusion that sensory perception and the self are real. A secondary meaning of *māyā* in Pāli is mystic formula, magic, or trick. The magician in theatrical performance nowadays does her or his work by means of illusory effects, by distracting the eye and exploiting the unreliability of the senses in order to appear to produce something out of nothing. This is the "trick." It is no small irony that *māyā*, the very quality of experience that Buddhism sets out to comprehend and overcome, lies at the heart of popular practices in Buddhist Asia. Is the recollection of past lives during meditation a hallucination by another name? Mystic formulas, secret languages, arcane diagrams, amulets worn by people in hazardous occupations, diviners, astrologers, spirit mediums – these are all stays against misfortune and uncertainty in the lives of many Buddhist people.[1]

NOTE

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MERIT

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Douglas Osto

INTRODUCTION

The notion of "merit" (Sanskrit: *puṇya* or *kuśala*; Pāli: *puñña* or *kusala*) is one of the most fundamental concepts in the Buddhist tradition. Intimately associated with the idea of merit and the practise of merit-making is the belief in karma. In its simplest understanding, karma (Pāli: *kamma*; "action") is the idea that every individual "reaps what they sow" in the sense that any intentional action of thought, word, or deed leads to a moral consequence at some future point. This agricultural metaphor from the Bible is particularly apt, for the Buddhist tradition itself often understood karma in such terms: actions plant "seeds" (*bīja*), which later bring forth "fruit" (*phala*) or results. Thus beneficial actions lead to positive results, while harmful actions elicit negative or painful ones. Merit, briefly stated, is "good karma"; or the result of beneficial past actions conducive to positive future outcomes. Such beneficial actions are therefore "meritorious." Together with the notions of karma and rebirth, merit forms one of the cornerstones of the traditional Buddhist worldview, which has remained more or less consistent with these basic notions since Buddhism's inception over two and a half thousand years ago. Moreover, much of Buddhist religious practice is focused on "merit making" – that is, performing activities believed to be particularly efficacious for the production of merit, in order to secure a happy rebirth in a future life.

The concept of merit is central to Buddhism, and it would be difficult to form any accurate picture of the tradition without some understanding of the basic principles underlying the belief in merit and the practice of merit-making. Nevertheless, the concept has received relatively scant scholarly treatment, and the topic is practically limitless given that the idea of merit and activities centered on merit-making are so pervasive throughout the entire history and geographical spread of the Buddhist tradition. Moreover, merit in Buddhism may be studied through any number of theoretical and disciplinary approaches such as intellectual history, comparative philosophy, ethics, sociology, anthropology, economics, archaeology, epigraphy, etc. Thus given the enormity of the topic, in the following pages I limit my comments to a number of themes related to the notion of merit in Buddhism: the origin of karma and rebirth in ancient India, merit in early Buddhism, merit in the Theravāda tradition, and Mahāyāna understandings.

ANCIENT INDIAN ORIGINS

Concepts of rebirth and karma (and therefore merit) began in ancient India with the development of the *śramaṇa* or "renouncer" traditions sometime between the ninth and sixth centuries BCE (Flood 1996: 75–76). Prior to the arising of these traditions, Vedic religion was primarily concerned with correct ritual performance, which would lead to beneficial this-worldly results (sons, cattle, etc.). Among the renouncer traditions, a number of new schools of thought arose both within orthodox Hinduism (such as Patañjali's Yoga, Classical Sāṃkhya, Mīmāṃsā, and later Advaita Vedānta) and outside of it (such as Buddhism, Jainism, and Ājīvikism) that shared certain presuppositions about the nature of the world, which differ radically from the Vedic worldview (Potter 1991). Foremost among these presuppositions were the ideas of karma and rebirth. The specific origin of these new concepts is unknown, but Johannes Bronkhorst (2011) has argued that they developed in the Greater Magadha region of India among the heterodox traditions (Buddhism, Jainism, Ājīvikism) and were subsequently adopted by Brahmanism. Regardless of their specific origin, the general concepts of karma and rebirth were widely accepted among the renouncer traditions, with each maintaining its particular interpretations of these beliefs based on its own religio-philosophical system.

Among the renouncers' important corollary beliefs to karma and rebirth were the notions of *saṃsāra* and *mokṣa*. *Saṃsāra* is the name given to the cycle of rebirth, which was considered both endless and painful (*duḥkha*). The *śramaṇa*s believed that every sentient being since beginningless time has gone through countless rebirths in various realms of existence such as in heavens and hells, and as animals, ghosts, and humans. While some realms are relatively more pleasant than others (such as the heavens), others are exceedingly unpleasant (such as the hells); however, the renouncers considered all ultimately unsatisfactory, impermanent, and a cause of suffering. Moreover, they believed this process of rebirth is unending unless one takes specific measures to stop it. Thus the ultimate religious goal within this worldview is to escape the painful cycle of rebirth by attaining release or liberation (*mokṣa*). The renouncer traditions conceived of *mokṣa* as a permanent state of freedom from the cycle of *saṃsāra*. The specifics of this state of ultimate release and the means by which it is attained vary from school to school. However, all *śramaṇa*s acknowledged that the engine that drives *saṃsāra* is karma.

One's karma determines not only what realm one will be reborn in, but also such things as one's gender, social status, physical appearance, and wealth. Good karma will lead to a happy rebirth as a human or god; whereas bad karma will lead to unfortunate lives in hell, or as an animal or ghost. There is obviously an ethical or moral dimension to the notion of what constitutes good or bad karma; but the details of what exactly leads to negative or positive results, and the extent or severity of karmic retribution, was always subject to debate. Nevertheless, it was widely accepted by the renouncers that harming other living beings is a cause of serious karmic demerit. Thus, *ahiṃsa* (nonviolence) became a vital component to a renouncer's religious practice.

Another idea universally accepted by the *śramaṇa*s is that passion (*rāga*) is karmically dangerous and should be suppressed and ultimately overcome. This is particularly the case with sexual passion (*kāma*), which leads naturally to the practice of complete celibacy (*brahmacārya*). Additionally, passion can lead to attachment, and an entire host of other negative emotions such as anger, hatred, and greed that in turn prompt activities such as stealing and lying, which are also considered highly demeritorious.

In short, *śramaṇa*s regarded involvement in the social world as connected with the saṃsāric world of painful rebirth. Therefore, in order to escape one must renounce or "drop out" of the social world altogether by giving up one's spouse, children, wealth, and social status. This was often conceived of as a type of spiritual death whereby the individual "dies" to the social world of saṃsāric existence in order to begin the life of a wandering ascetic in search of release. This transformation often included joining a fraternity of renouncers (or more rarely as sorority if the renouncer were a woman), who were dependent upon a lay following for such material support as food and clothing. However, dropping out of society was not considered sufficient in and of itself for liberation. During countless previous lives an individual has accumulated karma that will inevitably lead to rebirth unless it is somehow "burned off." Thus enters asceticism (Sanskrit: *tapas*, literally, "heat"), the practice of physical and mental austerities such as fasting and exposing oneself to extremes of heat and cold in order to remove preexisting negative karma.

Renunciation of society and asceticism are often seen as only the preconditions for escape; to permanently cut off future rebirths, something else is required. That something else is a special type of knowledge, or intuitive insight into the nature of reality, often referred to in Sanskrit as *jñāna* (from the Sanskrit root *jñā-*, meaning "to know;" cognate through the Greek, to English "gnosis"). Here it may be useful to recall the literal meaning of karma as "action." As evidenced from the Upaniṣads (among the earliest texts of Hindu philosophy, which appear during the renouncer period as philosophical elaborations on earlier Vedic texts), it is clear that an important debate took place during the rise of the *śramaṇa* movements as to the true nature of the self (see Edgerton 1965). Corollary to this debate was the question of whether as individuals we are primarily "doers" or "knowers." This led to a dichotomy between action or karma, on the one hand, and knowledge (*jñāna*) on the other. The overwhelming conclusion of the renouncers (as opposed to the early Vedic ritual texts) is that sentient beings are ultimately inactive, eternal, unchanging souls (variously called *ātman*, *jīva*, or *puruṣa*), which have somehow become confused or entangled in the samsaric process of activity, change, and suffering. Thus the goal of liberation is one of attaining a direct intuitive realization of one's true self as inactive, eternal, and unchanging. Meditation is the method by which such a realization is made possible. Here we see a fusion between philosophy and soteriology: the Indian philosophical systems, because they seek to know the true nature of self and its relation to reality in order to achieve liberation, are always soteriological in orientation. And since karma ("action") is what drives *saṃsāra*, at a certain point, *all karma* (both good and bad) must be transcended in order to attain liberation.

MERIT IN EARLY BUDDHISM

It is impossible to fully appreciate early Buddhism without some understanding of the religious context of the renouncer traditions out of which it arose. Buddhism, while offering its own unique understanding of the problem of suffering and its solution, in general accepted the notions of karma, rebirth, *saṃsāra*, and liberation. An important difference, however, between Buddhism and the other traditions was the Buddhists' categorical rejection of any kind of permanent unchanging self, or *ātman*. This doctrine of "no-self" (Sanskrit: *anātman*; Pāli: *anattā*) required Buddhists to give an account of experience without recourse to such an unchanging subject. It did this by employing various types of process models, such as the five aggregates (*skandha*; Pāli *khandha*) and the dependent

arising (*pratītya-samutpāda*; Pāli *paṭicca-samuppāda*) formula. Moreover, Buddhism conceived of liberation not in terms of the freedom of a permanent self from the cycle of *saṃsāra*, but as the realization of the "unconditioned," or nirvana, beyond the causally conditioned realm of *saṃsāra*. While there were a number of different ways in which early Buddhism characterized nirvana (bliss, absence of craving, end of suffering, etc.), a crucial point for the Buddha was that unlike *saṃsāra*, which is the realm of the conditioned (*saṃskṛta*; Pāli *saṃkhata*), nirvana is unconditioned (*asaṃskṛta*; Pāli *asaṃkhata*) (Gethin 1998: 77). The Buddha makes clear in a famous passage that if it were not for this unconditioned state, there would be no end to *saṃsāra*, and therefore no end of suffering:

> There exists, monks, that [no substantive is used] in which there is no birth, where nothing has come into existence, where nothing has been made, where there is nothing conditioned. If that in which there is no birth [etc.] did not exist, no escape here from what is [or: for one who is] born, become, made, conditioned would be known.
>
> (Collins 1998: 167; brackets his)

Since karma is the engine which drives the saṃsāric process, Buddhists maintained along with the other renouncer traditions that ultimately all karma must be transcended in order for one to reach the unconditioned state of nirvana and thereby permanently end rebirth.

Another important distinctive feature of Buddhism was its assertion that not all action generates karma, but only *intentional action*. This is in marked contrast to the Jains, who maintained that all actions are karmic, and therefore any and every activity must be transcended. This led the Jains to practice what Bronkhorst (2011: 20) refers to as "immobility asceticism" aimed at overcoming all actions, which ultimately ended in the Jain saint fasting to death. Buddhists, however, rejected this belief in favor of a more psychological view of karma.

The "four noble truths" are most likely the oldest and also simplest formulations of early Buddhist praxis. Briefly stated, the first truth is the truth of suffering (*duḥkha*; Pāli *dukkha*); the second is the origin (*samudaya*) of suffering; the third is the cessation (*nirodha*) of suffering; the fourth is the path (*mārga*; Pāli *magga*) to the cessation of suffering. The first truth declares the universal nature of saṃsaric suffering: birth, sickness, old age, death, and physical and psychological pain are all *duḥkha*. Significantly, the origin of suffering is identified as craving (*tṛṣṇā*; Pāli *taṇhā*; literally "thirst"). Since craving is a psychological state and the cause of suffering, Buddhism's emphasis on psychology is evidenced in the system's most basic formulation. The truth of cessation states that the end of craving is the end of suffering in the conditioned realm of *saṃsāra*; in other words, it is the unconditioned nirvana. The fourth truth is the Buddhist "eightfold path" of ethical and mental discipline designed to lead to the realization of nirvana.

Since for Buddhists both the cause of suffering and its cure are psychological in nature, the most important aspect of karma is the psychological intention or volition (*cetanā*) behind any given activity (McDermott 1980: 181). Moreover, unconscious actions, or unintentional actions, are not considered karmic in nature. Activities motivated by craving or other corollary harmful emotions (hatred, greed, lust) lead to negative karmic retribution; while activities motivated by positive mental states such as the so-called "divine abodes" (*brahmavihāra*: compassion (*karuṇā*), loving-kindness (*maitrī*; Pāli *mettā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekṣā*; Pāli *uppekkhā*)) lead to positive karmic results, or merit. However, like the other renouncer systems, Buddhism asserted that ultimately karma

must be transcended. The final cessation of all karma (*karma-nirodha*; Pāli *kamma-nirodha*) in Buddhism occurs through a direct intuitive realization of nirvana (McDermott 1980: 192). Buddhists understood this realization as wisdom (*prajñā*; Pāli *paññā*) – the ultimate end goal and culmination of Buddhist praxis, which would eradicate the false notion of self, all vestiges of craving, and permanently end the cycle of rebirth upon the death or "final nirvāṇa" (*parinirvāṇa*; Pāli *parinibbāna*) of the awakened Buddhist saint (*arhat*; Pāli *arahat*).

Martin Adam (2006) has illuminated aspects of the relationship between merit and nirvana in the Pāli Canon as it relates to six interlocking Buddhist concepts: *puñña*, *apuñña* (or *pāpa*), *kusala*, *akusala*, *sukka*, and *kaṇha*. As we have seen, an action that is *puñña* is meritorious, while action that is *apuñña* is demeritorious, or bad (*pāpa*). Actions that are *kusala*, on the other hand, are "skillful" or "wholesome"; while *akusala* actions are the opposite (unskillful, or unwholesome). Early sources maintain that skillful actions are those that are conducive to positive mental states and the ultimate goal of nirvana. The Buddha also appears to have distinguished between actions that are *sukka* and *kaṇha*. *Sukka* means "bright," "white," or "pure"; while *kaṇha* means its opposite (dark, black, impure). In relation to these last two concepts, the Buddha in the *Discourse to the Dog-Duty Ascetic* (*Kukkuravatika Sutta*, Majjhima Nikāya 57) divided actions into four categories: actions that are dark with dark results; actions that are bright with bright results; actions that are both dark and bright with dark and bright results; and actions that are neither dark nor bright with neither dark nor bright results – that is, action that conduces to the destruction of action (Adam 2005: 65).

How did early Buddhists understand the relations that exist between these three binary categories? Adam (2006) attempts to resolve this question through refining the ideas of "instrumental" action and "teleological" action first suggested by Abraham Velez de Cea in his study of Buddhist ethics (Velez de Cea 2004, as cited in Adam 2005). According to Adam, an action is instrumental when it tends toward certain results, without necessarily being the intention of the agent. Teleological action, on the other hand, is action that is intended for a specific end result or *telos*. Since different types of agents are identified in the Pāli Canon according to their spiritual attainments and aspirations, Adam (2006: 75–76) then maps this distinction on to these classes of agents. He suggests that three basic types of moral agents are identified in the Canon: ordinary human beings (*puthajjana*), those that have entered the higher training (*sekha*), and awakened beings (*arahat*). For ordinary humans who wish for better rebirth, good actions can be described as teleological meritorious (*puñña*), instrumentally skillful (*kusula*), and bright (*sukka*). For disciples who are working to attain nirvana, good actions are teleologically skillful (aimed at nirvana), instrumentally meritorious (they have the side-effect of producing good karma), and are neither bright nor dark (because they conduce to the end of action). And awakened beings such as the Buddha and Buddhist saints (*arahat*s), because they have destroyed the false notion of self, cannot be said to act in the ordinary sense of the word, and therefore their actions are beyond these categories – neither meritorious nor demeritorious, neither skillful nor unskillful, neither bright nor dark.

Adam's analysis goes a long way in explaining how early Buddhists understood the relationship between action (karma) and knowledge (*prajñā*; Pāli *paññā*) and how action may finally be ended and release from rebirth attained. However, a weakness in Adam's argument (as he points out) is that some Pāli sources assert that skillful (*kusula*) actions are perfected in the Buddhist saint (Adam 2005: 76). An ideological tension arises from the fact

that before the saint passes into "final nirvana" (dies), he or she clearly does act (in the common sense of the word at least by eating, walking, sleeping, talking, etc.), but this action is no longer thought to produce karma. I think one way of making sense of this seeming paradox is that Buddhist thinkers may have believed that *arahats* act spontaneously and selflessly out of perfect wisdom. In this manner their actions are not "intentional" in the ordinary sense, and since they are no longer intentional, they no longer produce karma. Moreover, *arahats* have eliminated mental afflictions such as desire, anger, and obscuration, and so their deeds are not motivated by the same mental factors as those of ordinary beings. As non-karmic actions, the deeds of saints are therefore considered the perfection of skillful activity, since they are free from the saṃsaric realm of conditioning. I shall return to these ideas below when I discuss Mahāyāna views.

Now that we have placed merit in its appropriate context within Buddhist praxis, we are better equipped to understand the specific mechanics and nuances of the belief. It is likely that from the time of Buddhism's conception, the vast majority of Buddhists were not renouncer monks or nuns but Buddhist laypeople, and so the average Buddhist would not have viewed the goal of nirvana within the present lifetime as realistically attainable. Therefore, for the majority of Buddhists the accumulation of merit for a better future rebirth would have been seen as the most pressing and relevant religious practice. Moreover, it seems that at a certain point nirvana came to be viewed as more or less unattainable for the average monastic. Thus even for Buddhist renunciates the acquisition of merit became a more important religious goal than the quest for nirvana. This, however, does not mean that the goal was ever rejected entirely; rather, a consensus view seems to have emerged that at some (often far distant) future every good Buddhist would eventually renounce the world, and then strive for and attain release from *saṃsāra*.

Canonical Pāli sources identify three qualities that are particularly efficacious for generating merit: giving (*dāna*), moral practice (*sīla*), and meditation or mental cultivation (*bhāvana*) (McDermott 1980: 190). In the extra-canonical catalog of "ten meritorious deeds" (*dasakusala-kamma*), these three begin a list of ten followed by: showing respect to one's superiors, attending to superiors' needs, transferring merit, rejoicing in the merit of others, listening to the Buddha's teachings, preaching the Dharma, and having right beliefs (Strong 1987: 383). Giving or *dāna* is the Buddhist source of merit-making *par excellence*, and it has the specific meaning of laypeople giving material support to monastics, including food, robes, monasteries, reliquaries (*stūpa*), etc. The reason this type of giving is considered so efficacious is that laypeople view the monastic community as a "field of merit" (*puṇya-kṣetra*) (Strong 1987: 384). Here we witness the vital symbiosis that occurs between Buddhist lay and monastic communities. Buddhist monks and nuns are required to follow a very strict and highly detailed list of rules set out in a code of discipline known as the Vinaya. These rules serve multiple purposes: they help control the monastic's craving and other negative mental states, thereby progressing him (or her) along the path; they help guarantee the harmonious functioning of the monastic community; and their strict adherence guarantees to the laity that the monastics are virtuous. The virtue of monks and nuns is what secures them in the eyes of the laity as "fields of merit," thereby inspiring the latter to give material support to the monastic community and generate positive karmic results.

The practice of virtue (*sīla*) constitutes the second main means of acquiring merit. For the Buddhist layperson this consists in maintaining the "five precepts" to abstain from five acts: killing, stealing, lying, sexual misconduct, and consumption of intoxicants. For monks and nuns the practice of virtue is much more involved and requires that they adhere to more

than 200 rules (numbers vary among Vinaya traditions and for monks and nuns). The five precepts form the basis of Buddhist ethics, and those who follow them generate merit for themselves. Conversely, breaking the precepts leads to negative karmic results or demerit. The more strict the practice of virtue, the more merit is accumulated. The practice of virtue and mental culture (*bhāvana*) are the basis for the monastic community (*saṃgha*) serving as a "field of merit" for laypeople.

One other aspect of merit-making bears special consideration – that is the belief and practice of the transference of merit. From his study of karma and rebirth in Buddhism, James McDermott concludes that taken as a whole the Pāli Canon "is not fully consistent" about the notion of transferring merit (McDermott 1980: 190). While there is a strong emphasis on the personal nature of karma (each person's karma is his/her own and must be worked out for oneself), the belief and practice that one is able to transfer merit through an intentional act of dedication is also found in the Pāli *Tipiṭika* (ibid.). Moreover, Gregory Schopen (1985) has conclusively dispelled a long-standing scholarly myth that the doctrine of merit transfer was a Mahāyāna innovation by demonstrating from his study of Indian Buddhist inscriptions that this practice was widespread among the mainstream Indian Buddhist schools. McDermott speculates that the notion may have been "a popular development traceable to the Brahmanic *śrāddha* rites [for deceased relatives]" (McDermott 1980: 190; my brackets). There may be some truth to this claim for, as McDermott points out (ibid.), the practice of transferring merit to *peta*s (literally the "deceased," but commonly referred to in English according to the Chinese designation of "hungry ghosts") is a recurring theme in the Pāli collection of "ghost stories" known as the *Petavatthu*. Also, common recipients of merit transfer found in the inscriptions studied by Schopen (1985) are the donor's deceased parents. The basic belief is that by dedicating one's merit to a deceased relative one might relieve some or all of the effects of negative karma from which the deceased is suffering. However, by such an act one does not lose one's own merit for, as we have seen from the above list, the act of merit transfer is itself a meritorious act and therefore generates even more merit for the donor. The dead are not the only recipients of merit transfer – one can in fact dedicate merit to whomever one wishes. While parents (living or dead) are common beneficiaries in Indian inscriptions, in Mahāyāna Buddhist epigraphs "all sentient beings" (*sarva-sattva*) become the standard inheritors of merit transfer (see below for more on Mahāyāna).

MERIT IN THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM

In Melford Spiro's now classic *Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes* (1970), he divides Burmese Buddhism into four main types: nibbanic Buddhism, kammatic Buddhism, apotropaic Buddhism, and esoteric Buddhism. Spiro defines Burmese esoteric Buddhist ideologies as only marginally related to the normative tradition, which "represent a syncretism of occult (Indian, Chinese, and indigenous) beliefs with an overlay of Buddhist doctrines, with which, in order to legitimize them, they are loosely associated" (1970: 162). Apotropaic Buddhism Spiro defines as a "religion of magical protection" (1970: 140ff). Nibbanic Buddhism is aimed at the soteriological goal of nirvana, and kammatic Buddhism addresses the issues of karma, rebirth, and merit. Spiro's distinction between Burmese nibbanic and kammatic Buddhism clearly presents the early Buddhist (and Indian renouncer tradition's) tension between knowledge and karma. This is not surprising because the Theravāda school is well known for its religious conservativism, and such a tension is

evidenced in the Pāli texts that the tradition views as canonical. However, where Spiro's analysis seems to miss the mark is when he claims that the original soteriological goal of Buddhism was nirvana, but that there has been a "shift in the conception of soteriological action" in contemporary Theravāda Buddhism (1970: 92). He writes:

> Hence in nibbanic Buddhism salvation is achieved, not by works (and certainly not by faith), but only through knowledge (*paññā*); and since meditation alone produces the knowledge requisite for salvation, meditation is *the* soteriological act of nibbanic Buddhism. … Among contemporary *Theravāda* Buddhists, on the other hand, not knowledge but merit is the goal of religious action, for merit alone improves one's karma, and good karma is prerequisite for *their* soteriological aim, viz., a happy rebirth. … In short, there has been an important shift in *Theravāda* Buddhism from salvation through knowledge to salvation through works.
>
> (Spiro 1970: 93; italics his)

Given my reading of the early sources, Spiro's characterization of a soteriological "shift" seems inappropriate. On the contrary, the view of modern Burmese villagers appears perfectly consonant with a very ancient Indian Buddhist attitude toward merit and nirvana. It is clear that the knowledge/action dichotomy is an ancient one within the tradition, and the goal of transcending all karma through the realization of nirvana has only ever been the objective of a spiritual elite of Buddhist renunciates. Judging by the textual and epigraphical evidence, I think it fair to assume that the vast majority of Buddhists since the time of the Buddha have been laypeople, not monks or nuns (renunciates require a substantial body of lay supporters to supply their material needs). Thus I think it fair to conclude that the goal of acquiring merit (rather than nirvana) has always been the main objective of most Buddhists throughout history. However, I would not go so far as to claim that this is an alternative soteriology; rather, it seems that better rebirth through merit has been considered by the majority to be a more proximate goal, while nirvana has always remained the ultimate goal for mainstream Buddhists (including Theravāda Buddhists). Nirvana is never rejected as the ultimate objective – it is just a goal that most consider out of reach in their present lifetimes. In this regard, I concur with Strong's criticism of Spiro's "two Buddhisms" in his investigation of Indian Buddhist stories about great acts of giving (*dāna*) from the northern tradition (Strong 1990: 102–23). Strong states: "The texts that we have examined, however, suggest that, at least in acts of *dāna*, these two dimensions of Buddhist life [nibbanic and kammatic] are inextricably interwoven" (ibid.; brackets mine).

In his chapter on merit, Spiro states that the ideas of merit and demerit are "the building blocks of Buddhist belief and practice in Burma; without them the entire edifice of kammatic Buddhism would collapse" (1970: 94), and that, "This is true everywhere, of course, in *Theravāda* Asia" (1970: 94 n. 2). Here we see evidence of what Spiro accurately calls "the central concept of merit" in the modern Theravāda tradition. In illuminating this point, Spiro points out the semantic fusion of the separate Pāli concepts of *puñña* and *kusala* in the modern context: "Thus, in Ceylon and Thailand *kusula* has been dropped in favor of *puñña* (Sinhalese, *pin*; Thai, *boon*), while in Burma *puñña* has been dropped in favor of *kusula* (Burmese, *ku.thou*)" (Spiro 1970: 97). While Spiro sees this as further evidence of a doctrinal and motivational "shift" in the Theravāda from nibbanic to kammatic Buddhism, I think it makes perfect sense given Adam's analysis of the Pāli sources discussed above. For the "ordinary person" (that is, your average Buddhist layperson), actions that are

meritorious (*puñña*) are also skillful (*kusula*), thus there is no need to keep both Pāli terms distinct in the modern languages of Theravāda Buddhists.

Overall, Spiro's anthropological study of Burmese villagers demonstrates a strong continuity in the belief and practice of merit-making from the early Indian tradition. Villagers questioned by Spiro were practically unanimous in declaring that giving is the best way to make merit (1970: 102), and that for the Burmese, "the merit deriving from *dāna* is proportional to *the spiritual quality of the recipient* rather than that of the donor" (1970: 107; italics his). Thus monks are considered a better "field of merit" than anyone else, and more spiritually advanced monks are the best sources of merit. From a sociological point of view, all of this makes perfect sense: any religious tradition that exalts an elite group of other-worldly (or world-denying) ascetics, who follow a lifestyle of complete renunciation, celibacy, and economic nonproductivity, and who are completely dependent upon external material support for their survival, would need to provide a strong motivational incentive for the average person to provide for the needs of such an elite. Moreover, as Charles Keyes (1983: 261–86) has demonstrated in his study of Thai Buddhism, one of the best acts of *dāna* is the "giving" of one's son to the monastic community, i.e., having him ordain as a monk (even if only temporarily). This type of giving also ensures the continuation of the monastic community. Thus the practice of *dāna* is so central to Buddhism that it would be impossible to imagine the tradition existing in the world without it. And corollary to this view of *dāna* is the tradition's positive assessment of wealth. Material wealth's ultimate value is in its potential to generate merit, which in turn leads to more wealth in future rebirths. In this regard, Russell Sizemore and Donald Swearer sum up the connection nicely when they state:

> In fact, we may go so far as to suggest that religious giving is of such importance in Buddhist thinking about wealth that *dāna* and not some concept of structural justice is the central concept in Buddhist social and political philosophy.
>
> (Sizemore and Swearer 1990: 13)

MERIT IN THE MAHĀYĀNA TRADITION

Scholarly consensus places the origin of the Mahāyāna in ancient India sometime near or slightly before the beginning of the first millennium of the Common Era (Gethin 1998: 225). We find the earliest evidence of the Mahāyāna in India in the Chinese translations of Mahāyāna discourses (*sūtra*) attributed to the Buddha beginning in the late second century CE. This formative period of the Mahāyāna is characterized by the proliferation of literally hundreds of new scriptures or sūtras within a few centuries. While the early hypothesis that Mahāyāna began has a popular lay movement (for examples, see Conze 1975 [1951], Lamotte 1954, Dutt 1958) has been dispelled by several more recent studies demonstrating a decidedly ascetic and monastic orientation to some of the earliest known sūtras (see, for example, Silk 1994, Harrison 1995, Nattier 2003, Boucher 2008), these new studies are preliminary and hardly decisive – much remains unknown about Mahāyāna's earliest period in India. Two of the primary difficulties involved in the research on early Mahāyāna are the vast amount of textual material to be studied and the challenges involved in establishing reliable chronologies of texts. Nevertheless, by a fairly early period certain philosophical and soteriological innovations appear in Mahāyāna texts that impacted the Buddhist notion of merit.

Two ideas that are found in early Mahāyāna sources such as the *Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines* (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*), which become hallmarks of the movement, are the bodhisattva ideal and the doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). The ultimate goal of early Buddhism and later (non-Mahāyāna) Buddhist schools has been to follow the Buddha's teachings and become awakened saints (*arhat*; Pāli *arahat*) who have realized no-self and attained the final release of nirvana. Although his teachings remain, the Buddha upon his final nirvana passed forever beyond *saṃsāra*. However, there was the belief that in the far future another buddha would appear (Maitreya; Pāli Metteyya) who would also "turn the wheel of Dharma" (teach the Buddhist truths). Moreover, buddhas before Śākyamuni also existed in the past and taught the Dharma. Since *saṃsāra* is limitless, Buddhists conceived of an infinite series of buddhas stretching from the beginningless past on into the unending future. Buddhas before becoming buddhas in their final birth are extremely rare individuals who long ago vowed to postpone their final nirvana as saints, in order to become fully awakened beings who would reintroduce the Buddhist teachings once they had been lost. Doubtlessly this view was in part inspired by the popular collection of Buddhist fables known as "birth stories" (*Jātaka*) about the historical Buddha's previous lives. In these stories the Buddha-to-be is referred to as "Bodhisattva" ("awakening-being"; that is, a being who is on the way to complete buddhahood).

While in early Buddhism the spiritual status of the Buddha and the saint were more or less equal (both had attained the same state of nirvana), it seems that over the centuries the status of the Buddha increased, with a corresponding decrease in the status of the saint. By the time of Mahāyāna's appearance, the new Buddhists viewed the goal of arhatship as inferior to that of the complete awakening of a buddha. Thus a new religious aim was conceived: that one should become a completely awakened, omniscient buddha for the sake of all beings. One who sets out on this quest takes "the bodhisattva's vow," to undergo innumerable lifetimes perfecting the various virtues and skills required to become a buddha. Corollary to this new idea is an expanded cosmology in which infinite buddhas inhabit a limitless universe in rarefied worlds known as "buddha fields" (*buddha-kṣetra*).

Along with the bodhisattva ideal, another extremely important Mahāyāna innovation is the doctrine of emptiness. While mainstream Buddhist schools assert there is no enduring permanent self, they recognize the existence of various phenomena, elements, or factors (*dharma*) that constitute experience. Analysis of these factors into various lists and categories was one of the primary activities of Buddhist philosophy known as Abhidharma (Pāli: Abhidhamma; see the chapter by Walser in this volume). One of the most important of these Abhidharma schools was the Sarvāstivāda, which maintained that although *dharma*s are momentary in the present they have a real, durable essence (*svabhāva*, literally "own-being" or "own-nature") that persists through the three realms of time – past, present, and future.

Some of the earliest Mahāyāna discourses, such as the oldest *Perfection of Wisdom* sūtras, attack the notion that *dharma*s have an essence. According to this view, all *dharma*s are actually "empty" of an essence or independent existence. Because everything arises in interdependence with everything else, nothing possesses *svabhāva*, including *dharma*s. In short, this view maintains that no positive statements about the ontological status of any entity may be asserted. This position was first systematized by Nāgārjuna, an Indian Buddhist monk who lived around the second century CE, who is viewed by the tradition as the founder of the Madhyamaka school of Mahāyāna philosophy. The most important of Nāgārjuna's philosophical texts, the *Verses on the Middle Way* (*Madhyamaka-kārikā*), puts

forth the thesis that all things lack an essence (*svabhāva*) and therefore may be characterized by their emptiness. In the *Verses on the Middle Way*, Nāgārjuna employs a dialectical logic in order to reduce to absurdity all viewpoints and thereby demonstrate that all views are based on the erroneous belief that language and concepts represent real substantial entities. One of the most famous verses from Nāgārjuna's treatise states that:

> There is not the slightest difference
> Between cyclic existence and nirvāṇa.
> There is not the slightest difference
> Between nirvāṇa and cyclic existence.
> > (XXV: 19; Garfield 1995)

Here we see the complete collapse of the ontological distinction between *saṃsāra* (cyclic existence) and nirvana, so crucial for early Buddhism and the later Abhidharma traditions, which categorized nirvana as an unconditioned *dharma*. For Nāgārjuna and the Mahāyānists who adhered to the notion of emptiness, the distinction between *saṃsāra* and nirvana becomes epistemological rather than ontological: delusive, ignorant cognition perceives *saṃsāra* as constituted by real ontological entities; awakened cognition does not.

The implications of such a position are far reaching. One was the development of a new buddhology, which claimed that buddhas attain a "nonabiding" nirvana, that there is no final passing away of buddhas, and that they possess different bodies (*kāya*) corresponding to different levels of reality. This idea developed over time into what is known as the "three bodies" (*trikāya*) doctrine. The historical Buddha that appeared in our world was a "manifestation body" (*nirmāṇa-kāya*) of a supramundane buddha possessing a perfected "enjoyment body" (*saṃbhoga-kāya*). However, all fully awakened buddhas have a third body that is coextensive with the ultimate body of truth (*dharma-kāya*) which, in the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras, for example, becomes identified with emptiness itself, the true nature of things (Williams 2009: 177).

The new Mahāyāna developments of the bodhisattva ideal and the doctrine of emptiness had important implications for the Mahāyāna understanding of merit. In this regard, Barbra Clayton (2006: 80–88) argues persuasively for a different orientation toward *puṇya* in Mahāyāna sources. Since, she points out, the ontological distinction between *saṃsāra* and nirvana had been undermined already by the time of Nāgārjuna's famous assertion of their nondifference, the Mahāyāna bodhisattva does not aim at transcending karma and *saṃsāra*, but rather strives to realize awakening. Thus *puṇya* need not be transcended, but can be cultivated limitlessly in order to use it for the salvation of sentient beings. This view clearly differs from the conception in mainstream Buddhism of the religious goal as the attainment of an unconditioned state beyond *puṇya*. Since the knowledge/action dichotomy so important to early Buddhism and the Theravāda has been overcome in the Mahāyāna with the collapse of the dualistic ontology of conditioned *saṃsāra* and unconditioned nirvana, the goal is no longer to overcome karma with knowledge. This results in the Mahāyāna with what I shall refer to as an "intensification of merit." In other words, since there is no longer an upper limit to its acquisition (whereby it serves only as a means to transcend the conditioned realm), acquiring limitless stores of merit becomes a new religious objective.

The new goal of complete buddhahood in the Mahāyāna also had important ramifications for the Mahāyāna view of merit. From a fairly early period in the Buddhist tradition it was believed that the Buddha possessed a perfect physical form characterized by the thirty-two

marks (*lakṣana*) of a "great man" (*mahāpuruṣa*). John Powers (2009) aptly demonstrates the importance of the Buddha's physical appearance, summarizing his findings by stating that "The transcendental physical beauty of the Buddha is a core trope of every text I have seen that discusses his life and teaching career" (2009: 3), and that the Indian textual tradition has constructed the body of the Buddha as "the highest development of the masculine physique" (ibid.). This attitude toward the Buddha's body is part of a wider Buddhist view of bodies that Susanne Mrozik (2007) refers to as "physiomoral discourse," which foregrounds bodies as critical in the ethical development of oneself and others. Both the notion of the Buddha's physical perfection and the larger physiomoral discourse are based on the notion (of course) that one's physical form is determined by one's karma. Thus the Buddha possesses a perfect form because of the inconceivable amount of merit he has acquired through countless lifetimes perfecting the bodhisattva's path. Thus for the Mahāyānists who are striving for complete buddhahood, an equal amount of merit is required in order to attain the perfect body of a buddha. Here we see once again an intensification of the importance of merit.

With the increased importance of merit accumulation in the Mahāyāna also came shifts in the views as to the best means of acquiring it. Many of the early Mahāyāna discourses go to great lengths to describe the vast, incalculable stores of merit that will be accumulated if one merely recites, copies, or teaches a particular *sūtra*. For example, in the *Diamond Sūtra* the Buddha declares: "those sons and daughters of good family who will take up this discourse on Dharma, will bear it in mind, recite, study and illuminate it in full detail for others…. All these beings, Subhuti, will beget and acquire an immeasurable and incalculable heap of merit" (Conze 1973: 130; see also Schopen 1975, for other examples). Here we see the emergence of what Schopen (1975) calls "the cult of the book," whereby Mahāyāna sūtras self-promote their importance by offering quick and easy methods to acquire inconceivable amounts of merit (see the chapter by Hubbard in this volume). Thus Mahāyāna challenges the undisputed superiority of the monastic community as a field of merit and introduces new means of merit acquisition.

The Mahāyāna bodhisattva ideal also led to an increased importance being placed upon transference of merit (Strong 1987: 385). The bodhisattva's path begins when one generates the initial "thought of awakening" (*bodhicitta*). This is an altruistic act motivated by "great compassion" (*mahākaruṇā*) by which one vows to attain complete buddhahood in order to save limitless numbers of beings. This vow begins the path of the accumulation of merit (*saṃbhāra-mārga*), whereby the bodhisattva acquires vast stores of merit through countless lifetimes of self-sacrifice and practices the perfections: giving, morality, patience, energy, meditation, and wisdom (ibid.). Over time a scheme of ten stages developed outlined in the *Discourse on the Ten Levels* (*Daśabhūmika Sūtra*) whereby a bodhisattva through merit and meditation acquires various supernatural powers as s/he approaches omniscient buddhahood. The belief developed in certain highly advanced bodhisattvas such as Avalokiteśvara (the bodhisattva of compassion), Mañjuśrī (the bodhisattva of wisdom), and Samantabhadra, who would dedicate their vast stores of merit to help suffering beings (ibid.). In this way, these "celestial" bodhisattvas acquired the status of Mahāyāna saviors. Moreover, Mahāyānists believed bodhisattvas, due to their inconceivable merit, could make vows (*praṇidhāna*) to acquire specific types of "buddha fields" and special powers to aid beings upon their attainment of buddhahood. This aid was believed to continue once a bodhisattva attains buddhahood, and cults arose centered on heavenly buddhas such as Amitābha and Akṣobhya who reside in far distant, perfect worlds in which one may be reborn (see the

chapter by Jones in this volume). These buddha fields are often described in Mahāyāna discourses in elaborate detail as pure lands made entirely out of gold, silver, lapis, diamonds, jewels, and other priceless objects.

The mention of jewelled pure lands highlights another aspect of merit that is intensified in the Mahāyāna – that is, the relationship between wealth and merit. Nowhere in the Mahāyāna collection of texts is this connection more evident than in the popular narrative sūtra known as the *Supreme Array Discourse* (*Gaṇḍavyūha Sūtra*; see Osto 2008). The hero of the story is a young man named Sudhana ("Good Wealth"), who is the son of a merchant-banker (*śreṣṭhin*). He is called "Good Wealth" because at his conception and birth the "seven treasures" (*saptaratna*) rained down from the sky and jewelled flowers sprung from the ground. These seven treasures are a standard list of precious substances usually consisting of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, red pearl, emerald, and coral. Such descriptions of fabulous wealth are common in the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, and the story is distinctive for the frequency, length, and self-conscious use of such tropes. In the text a clear connection is made between one's wealth and one's spiritual status. Moreover, the sūtra portrays the bodhisattva's path as the accumulation of merit, and as merit increases one's perception of reality becomes magically transformed so that objects, buildings, and entire worlds appear constructed out of priceless objects, culminating in the realization of the Dharma Realm (*dharma-dhātu*), conceived of as a jewelled paradise beyond all economic hardships (Osto 2008: 86–87).

The appearance of merchant-bankers and the seven treasures, however, are not unique to the *Gaṇḍavyūha*. From an early period of Indian Buddhism there appears to be a special relationship between Buddhism and merchants (*śreṣṭhin*; Gokhale 1977). This connection is further developed in Mahāyāna discourses, where one finds a strong literary presence of these merchants and other wealthy, urban elites in numerous sources. Also, the seven treasures occur repeatedly in Mahāyāna sūtras representing the supreme substances for religious giving and as the materials out of which pure lands such as Amitābha's Sukhavātī are constructed. In short, a particular strong ideology of merit–wealth exchange appears in Mahāyāna discourses, reinforced by the notion of the seven treasures. Moreover, archaeological evidence indicates that merchants carried these same treasures along the Silk Road for trade between India and China (Liu 1988, Neelis 2011). Thus traders with their seven treasures and Mahāyāna monks with their texts extolling the spiritual virtues of these substances together spread the religious message of the Mahāyāna from India to China along the Silk Road. These Mahāyāna sūtras were then translated into Chinese, becoming some of the earliest textual evidence we possess the Mahayana.

One more development in East Asian Mahāyāna warrants mentioning, if only as a counter-example to what has been discussed thus far. Pure Land Buddhism, although it had roots in the Indian tradition, comes into its own as a movement in China. Pure Land focuses on the figure of Amitābha Buddha and his pure buddha field Sukhāvatī, which is located in the far western region of the universe. According to the Pure Land sūtras, before Amitābha became a buddha he made a vow that anyone who called upon him would be reborn in his pure land. The power of this vow and the perfection of his buddha field were, of course, due to his inexhaustible merit. Around this belief evolved the practice of "recollection of the Buddha" (Chinese: *nianfo* 念佛), which primarily involves recitation of the phrase, "Adoration to Amitābha Buddha" (Chinese: *namo Amituo fo* 南無阿彌陀佛) (Williams 2009: 252). This practice was also closely associated with the notion of Last Days – the belief that the Buddha's Dharma had declined to such an extent that it is no longer possible to achieve liberation by one's own efforts.

Pure Land was further developed in Japan by Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212 CE) and his disciple Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), who founded the True Pure Land sect (Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗; Williams 2009: 259–66). In the teachings of Shinran, Buddhism comes close to being conceived as a religion of pure salvation by grace, which largely negates the traditional Buddhist understanding of merit. For Shinran human nature is so corrupted by negative karma that there is no hope of salvation by one's "own power" (Japanese: *jiriki* 自力). Only through the "other power" (Japanese: *tariki* 他力) of Amitābha and his vow can we be saved (i.e., be reborn in the Pure Land). As Williams (2009: 263) states: "For Shinran all transference of merit is from Amitābha to us and not from us. … Sentient beings have no merit, they have nothing to transfer." However, even Shinran's negation of the traditional Buddhist understanding of merit is defined in terms of merit – we are saved through the infinite merit of Amitābha, not our own.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages I have attempted to present a synoptic view of the idea of merit in the Buddhist tradition. Given the enormity and complexity of the topic, undoubtedly much has been overlooked, ignored, or glossed over only superficially. However, if I have succeeded in anything, I hope to have made a convincing argument for the centrality of merit and merit-making in the Buddhist tradition. Additionally, I hope I have demonstrated how the concept of merit is intimately interlocked with other Buddhist notions such as karma, rebirth, *saṃsāra*, and nirvana. The worldview that spawned these ideas emerged in ancient India over two and half millennia ago among ascetics seeking a means to escape a world that they experienced as fundamentally painful. Early Buddhism offered its own solution to this problem by focusing on intentional action and the overcoming of desire to reach an unconditioned state beyond the realm of suffering. However, striving for a better rebirth within the cycle of existence was always seen as a legitimate, if ultimately subordinate, goal in relation to nirvana. In this way Buddhism not only offered a resolution to the action/knowledge dichotomy, but also presented a coherent ideology to act as a motivational incentive for lay Buddhists to provide material support for a renunciate group of elite practitioners.

In my analysis of the Theravāda tradition, I have emphasized the strong continuity it shares with early Buddhist notions of merit and merit-making. Anthropological studies by such scholars as Spiro, Swearer, and Keyes confirm the continued centrality of merit-making for Buddhists in Theravāda countries, and (contra Spiro) establish not a shift in soteriology, but an enduring ethos that maintains an ascetic ideal, and yet reconciles it with this-worldly concerns. In my investigation of merit in the Mahāyāna, I indicate how the bodhisattva ideal and the doctrine of emptiness lead in many ways to the "intensification" of concern with merit. That is, with the erasure of the action/knowledge dichotomy, the "sky was the limit" for merit acquisition, and Mahāyānists believe that in order to attain complete buddhahood with a perfected body and buddha field, incalculable stores of merit will be needed. Thus new ways of obtaining merit were conceived such as copying, reciting, and preaching the new Mahāyāna sūtras. Moreover, the apotheosis of the celestial bodhisattvas and heavenly buddhas led to the increased importance of the transference of merit in the Mahāyāna. Finally, even Shinran's True Pure Land, which runs ideologically counter to the traditional idea of merit, used the notion of Amitābha's limitless merit to explain the Buddha's ability to save all sentient beings. While much more work remains to

be done on this topic, it is my hope that this brief treatment will inspire further scholarly investigation of the concept of merit in the Buddhist tradition.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

BUDDHIST SECTARIANISM[1]

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David B. Gray

INTRODUCTION

The Buddhist religion, when imagined as a monolithic entity, is often conceived as a peaceful religion, advocating meditation and calm mental states and behavior. Like many stereotypes, this characterization is not entirely accurate. It is inadequate insofar as it fails to accurately characterize the great diversity of Buddhist traditions and Buddhist individuals. While many Buddhists do advocate peace – as well as virtues that contribute to peace, such as patience, compassion, and loving kindness – Buddhists have varied considerably in their adherence to these virtues, and Buddhist communities have not been immune to conflict. The history of Buddhism is replete with examples of controversy and conflict between competing sectarian traditions.

While not all of the groups covered these essays are "sects" as technically defined by contemporary sociologists,[2] I would argue that many Buddhist groups exhibit strong sectarian tendencies, and I employ the term "sectarianism" as used by Charles Jones in the context of contemporary Buddhism in Taiwan. He uses the term "sectarian" to "indicate a consciousness that, within the overall context of Chinese (or even just Taiwanese) Buddhism, the ideals and practices of one's group are unique to it, and that they are not transplantable to or practicable with other Buddhist groups" (1999: 197). I would go a step farther and argue that many Buddhist groups not only claim to have a unique set of teachings and practices, but that they typically claim that these teachings and practices are the ultimate or highest expression of the Buddha's doctrine. They thus implicitly or directly claim a superior status vis-à-vis other Buddhist traditions, which are necessarily seen as promulgating "lesser," if genuine, or even false teachings. Buddhist groups have sectarian tendencies, insofar as they claim to possess teachings and practices that enable their practitioners to escape cyclic existence or attain awakening. While they may acknowledge that other traditions preserve teachings spoken by the Buddha, these are often portrayed as inferior, aimed at mundane goals, such as accumulation of merit. The common view that one's tradition is special does not necessarily lead to conflict, but it may under the right conditions, such as competitive environments, in which different groups are competing for patronage or political influence. These conflicts, when they arise, often manifest as disputes over doctrine or practice and, in some cases, contests regarding patronage, power, and control of economic resources, such as land.

This chapter will outline the history of Buddhist sectarianism in two sections, exploring first the development of "classical" Buddhist sectarian traditions in India over several centuries following the death of Śākyamuni Buddha. New sectarian traditions developed in East Asia and Tibet as Buddhism spread to these regions, and their development will be outlined in the second section of this chapter.

THE RISE OF BUDDHIST SECTARIANISM IN INDIA

Early Buddhist Sects

Scholars of Buddhism often use the term "Early Buddhism" to refer to the period prior to the formal division of the Buddhist community into sectarian groups. Unfortunately, not much is known about this time, since most Buddhist texts and monuments were composed and built following the division of the Buddhist community. However, admirable attempts have been made to shed light on this period, most notably by Greg Bailey and Ian Mabbett (2003).

While "early Buddhism" is a useful term, it would be a mistake to imagine that Buddhist communities even during this early period were monolithic. The evolution of sectarianism in Buddhism was almost certainly the result of the development of distinct systems of thought and practice by different Buddhist communities, as well as the absence of a central authority to establish standards of orthodoxy and orthopraxy. Both the rapid spread of Buddhism in India and the lack of a centralized religious hierarchy are arguably due to significant teachings that were widely attributed to the Buddha himself.

The universalistic message of the Buddha, combined with his skillful dialogic approach, such that he adapted his teachings to suit the needs of his interlocutors, would seemingly undermine sectarian tendencies in the Buddhist communities that revere and study these teachings. But misreadings of the Buddha's teachings have contributed to the construction of exclusionary sectarian identities.

The lack of centralized religious authority in Buddhism is rooted in the Dharma, the teachings attributed to the Buddha. These include his famous refusal to appoint a successor, as recorded in the *Discourse of the Great Final Release* (*Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*). Rather than appointing a successor or suggesting that his followers select one, he advises the monks to "live as islands," "with the Dhamma as your refuge" (Walshe 1995: 245), without reliance on another's guidance.

Buddhist scriptures advanced the ideal of the monk as impartial and detached, freed from worldly political attachments. The *Sammāparibbājaniya Sutta*, for example, states that the ideal of the wandering monk should be "independent (*anissito*), not led by others"; such a monk would be a "learned believer, seeing the way (to salvation), not following any faction among the factious" (Bailey and Mabbett 2003: 187).

Early Buddhist communities advocated the ideal of the detached monk who has mastered the teachings and his own mind, and hence is able to embody the Buddha's recommended state of being an "island" unto himself, and this ideal continues to resonate in many Buddhist traditions. But this ideal is a representation of an individual who is very close to the goal of awakening. It is not an active characterization of the novice student, who must necessarily seek out a teacher to impart the teachings and thus cannot manifest the ideal of independence and impartiality. Perhaps as a result of this, Buddhism did and does bear a considerable tendency toward sectarianism.

Buddhist literature portrays its founder as initially refusing to lay down rules for monastic conduct, on the grounds that the monks were advanced practitioners who did not need them. But as the monastic community grew and some monks began engaging in problematic behavior, he made rules as needed to resolve these problems (Powers 2009: 69–70). Conflicts within the Buddhist community were, naturally, among the problems that arose. The model advocated by the Buddha for the resolution of conflicts was a consensual one. According to the *Basket of Monastic Discipline* (*Vinayapiṭaka*) (*Mahāvagga* 4.1; translated in Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 1881: 325–29) the Buddha established the Pavāranā ceremony at the conclusion of the Vassa rainy season retreat, a period in which the monks and nuns would spend great amounts of time in each other's company in close quarters, as a means of resolving the conflicts that would inevitably arise. In this ceremony, the monks and nuns would confess their transgressions, which are punished and absolved by their peers in accordance with rules set down in the monastic code. For the resolution of larger problems, the *Vinayapiṭaka* describes, and hence advocates, the convening of councils of monks, the first of which was reportedly convened by Mahākassapa (Sanskrit Mahākāśyapa) at Rājagṛha shortly after the death of Śākyamuni Buddha (*Cullavagga* 11–12, translated in Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 1885: 370–414).

Gatherings such as the councils of Rājagṛha and Vaiśālī (which was held approximately one hundred years after the Buddha's death) described in canonical Buddhist literature would only be successful if the community reached consensus. This was apparently very difficult. In fact, the only convocation that was evidently successful in this sense was the first council, and the historical accuracy of the accounts of this council is doubtful (Collins 1990).

Sectarian tendencies developed in the Buddhist community within approximately one hundred years following the Buddha's death. Due to his apparent unwillingness to appoint a successor, as well as his instructions to monks and nuns to travel and avoid a sedentary lifestyle, there was likely little holding the community together in any coherent fashion. In the *Cullavagga*, the Buddha is likewise reported to have instructed the monks to teach the Dharma in the colloquial languages of the people they met in their travels and not to commit it to Sanskrit, in the manner of the brahmans (Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 1885: 149–51). The establishment of far-flung communities, studying and practicing the Dharma using different languages, in the absence of any centralized religious authority, almost certainly led to the formation of distinct sectarian Buddhist groups, as A. K. Warder has noted (1980: 290).

Buddhist literature, such as the *Mahāvagga* in the *Basket of Monastic Discipline*, portrays schism occurring as a result of disagreements concerning the monastic code of conduct (Rhys Davids and Oldenberg 1882: 285–91). The accuracy of this portrayal has in fact been confirmed by contemporary scholarship. The first schism in Buddhist history probably occurred at 116 years following the death of the Buddha. This was triggered by a reaction of a portion of the Buddhist community, the forebears of the Mahāsāṃghika ("Great Assembly") sect, to a somewhat radical attempt by a group of monks, the forebears of the Sthaviras, to add additional rules to the monastic code and expand the root Vinaya text.

The Buddhist community divided into sects known as *nikāya*. This term has been variously translated as "sect," "order," or "monastic fraternity"; the latter is the meaning of the term in contemporary Theravāda Buddhist communities as well as in ancient times. Richard Gombrich (1971: 30) has objected to the translation of *nikāya* as "sect," but the English term sect is actually an excellent translation of the Buddhist term *nikāya*, as both have the primary meaning of a "class or group," and a secondary meaning of a "religious

order" ("sect, *n.1*" Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed., 1989). The negative English connotation of a heretical, breakaway religious denomination is also not inappropriate, since the *nikāya*s emerged precisely due to differences in practice (of the monastic code most notably) as well as doctrine.

Buddhists have often characterized breakaway groups and their founders in harshly negative terms, revealing the strong sectarian tensions that characterized the relationships between these groups. Indeed, instigators of schism were often portrayed in a harsh light by their opponents. Perhaps the most infamous schismatic in Buddhist history is Mahādeva, a monk and leader of the faction that would become the Mahāsāṃghika sect, who put forth the famous "five theses" in the council held 116 years after the Buddha's death that led to the first schism. These theses proposed that *arhat*s (1) have nocturnal emissions, are still subject to (2) ignorance and (3) doubt, (4) rely on others, and lastly, that (5) the expression of sorrow is an integral step on the path to awakening. The first four theses denigrate the figure of the *arhat*, the "worthy ones" of early Buddhist who achieve liberation with the help of the three jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Monastic Community. Mahādeva was frequently portrayed in Buddhist literature as an incarnation of Māra, the "Evil One" of Buddhist mythology.

Traditional Buddhist sources consistently maintain that the community eventually fragmented into eighteen *nikāya* sects; however, they do not all agree on the groups included in the list of eighteen, and the various sources actually name over two dozen different *nikāya*s. Other schools, such as the Pudgalavāda, seem to have diverged on the basis of their philosophical positions, and he refers to these as "philosophical schools." Some groups, such as the Sarvāstivādins, began as Vinaya schools and later developed distinct philosophical positions, straddling this divide.

Among these two dozen or so early sects, none survived the decline of Buddhism in South Asia unchanged. The contemporary Theravāda Buddhist tradition claims descent from the Sthaviravāda sect. This is technically correct, but the truth is more complex, for Sthaviravāda itself subdivided into several other factions within several centuries following the death of the Buddha. Theravāda is derived from one of these subsects, the "Analytical" or Vibhajyavāda tradition which, as the name implies, was notable for its focus on analyzing the foundational elements of reality (*dharma*; Pāli *dhamma*).

Mahāyāna

There is also a second major Buddhist tradition, the Mahāyāna, which developed in India circa the first century BCE. Its origin has been the subject of considerable debate (Williams 1989: 20–26). Mahāyānists produced a number of new scriptures, which betray a considerable diversity of (sometimes contradictory) positions on a range of issues. It seems that it did not arise as a monolithic, centrally organized movement, but rather developed in a somewhat organic fashion, with a variety of different groups independently composing scriptures, each of which became the basis of a new "cult." As Gregory Schopen claimed,

> early Mahāyāna (from a sociological point of view), rather than being an identifiable single group, was in the beginning a loose federation of a number of distinct though related cults, all of the same pattern, but each associated with its specific text.
>
> (Schopen 1975: 181)

Generally speaking, these groups were united by belief in a new spiritual ideal, the bodhisattva, a person dedicated to the attainment of the complete awakening of a buddha, and a rejection of the early Buddhist ideal of the arhat.

Mahāyāna discourses attributed to the Buddha (*sūtra*) are filled with examples of polemical attacks on the early Buddhist traditions, to which they infamously applied the pejorative "Hīnayāna," literally "deficient" or "lesser" vehicle. These Mahāyāna scriptures were, naturally, held to be false teachings by adherents to their opponents. Despite the hostile rhetoric, relations between these traditions were not necessarily acrimonious. Reports of Chinese pilgrims indicate that Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna monks at times peacefully coexisted in the same monastery. However, there is also a history of conflict between them. During the third century CE, Mahāyāna was established in Sri Lanka at the Abhayagiri monastery. During the reign of Vohārika Tissa (214–36 CE), Theravāda Mahāvihāra monks convinced the minister Kapila that the Mahāyāna sūtras were not truly teachings of the Buddha. Kapila ordered that they be burned and the monks who advocated them disrobed and banished. Soon afterward the monastery was pillaged by King Goṭhakābhaya (249–262 CE), who also banished more monks to South India. But the tables turned during the reign of King Mahāsena (276–303 CE), who was convinced by the South Indian monk Saṅghamitta that the Theravāda Mahāvihāra's teachings were false. The king decreed that no alms should be given to its monks, which led to the temporary abandonment and destruction of that monastery (Holt 1991: 64).

Mahāyāna Buddhist sūtras, moreover, indicate intra-sectarian tensions between different communities, particularly between groups of monks who were forest-dwelling and others who settled in monasteries. These works often contain attacks on opposing Buddhist groups from whom they either have been criticized, or expect criticism. The *Eight Thousand Line Perfection of Wisdom Discourse* (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*), for example, claims that it is meritorious to teach the Dharma in towns, and it suggests that monks who seek isolation in the forest are deceived by Māra and will be reborn in hell. But the *Questions of Rāṣṭrapāla Discourse* (*Rāṣṭrapāla-paripṛcchā Sūtra*), a Mahāyāna work presumably authored by Buddhist monks who advocated self-sacrifice and asceticism in the forest, criticized monks who live settled monastic lives (Boucher 2008: 56–61, 64–67).

Somewhat later, two main schools of Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy would arise in India, namely the Madhyamaka ("Middle Way") and the Yogācāra ("Yogic Practice"; or Cittamātra: "Mind-Only"), each of which focused on scriptures (*sūtra*) that express their viewpoints as well as treatises (*śāstra*) composed by their great masters, such as Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250) and Asaṅga (ca. fourth century), respectively. Although there were strong advocates of both schools in India around the mid-first millennium CE, it is unclear to what extent these schools constituted distinct sects. Unlike in East Asia, where they would gain the status of established schools, it appears that in India, at least by the eighth century, the two traditions were often integrated in an approach that has been termed the "Yogācāra-Madhyamaka Synthesis" (Lindtner 1997).

Esoteric Buddhism

The esoteric or tantric Buddhist tradition, which arose in India during the seventh century CE, is certainly a "sect" in the sense used in the chapter. This is because its advocates claimed that it possesses a unique and supreme system of practice, enabling complete awakening in as little as one lifetime. However, it is also clear that it was *not* a sect vis-à-vis the Mahāyāna

tradition that gave rise to it. Adherents of this tradition, which they termed the Vajrayāna, did not claim that it is distinct from Mahāyāna. They rather asserted that it is part of Mahāyāna, a distinct practice methodology that they termed the "way of mantra" (*mantra-yāna*), which is superior to the older "way of the perfections" (*pāramitā-yāna*), the approach to practice advocated by the classical Mahāyāna tradition. Perhaps for this reason, there is little sign of conflict between advocates of these approaches to Mahāyāna practice. Rather, the two paradigms were typically integrated, with older Mahāyāna practices included within the newer tantric systems, which were in turn often incorporated as preliminary trainings for more advanced tantric techniques, or even as preliminary and concluding stages to the tantric ritual cycles (*sādhana*). There is thus no sign of sectarian differentiation or conflict between esoteric and non-esoteric Mahāyāna Buddhists in India, although there is evidence of conflict between esoteric Buddhists and monks from more conservative sects (Gray 2005: 67–68).

The sectarian tendencies present within the Mahāyāna tradition in India would come to the surface later in Tibet and East Asia, where it became fully established. In these regions, Mahāyāna Buddhist communities would give rise to a number of different sectarian traditions, expressing once again the tendency of Buddhist communities to differentiate along regional, doctrinal, and praxical grounds.

BUDDHIST SECTARIANISM IN EAST ASIA AND TIBET

China

Buddhism reached China during the first century CE and gained rapid acceptance there, in part due to the open intellectual climate and the weak and eventually fragmented political environment of that period. Although the Chinese were interested in a broad range of Buddhist scriptures and translated many hundreds of them over the following millennium, it was the Mahāyāna tradition that ultimately took root there.

Within several centuries following the initial transmission of Buddhism to China, a number of Buddhist sects arose. These groups do not appear to have been based on any sectarian traditions that developed in India. However, they followed the pattern that Gregory Schopen (1975) observed in early Mahāyāna Buddhism in India, namely the development of "cults" or local traditions centering on a single scripture, such as the Tiantai tradition's focus on the *Lotus Sūtra*, as will be discussed below.

By the middle of the first millennium CE, Chinese Buddhists developed new sectarian traditions that differentiated themselves along both doctrinal and praxical lines. The doctrinal traditions arose from natural attempts to understand the Buddha's teaching as recorded in hundreds of scriptures, many of which presented teachings that were seemingly contradictory. Rather than face the real and troubling possibility that some of these works might be spurious, many Chinese Buddhists seized on the notion already advanced in some Mahāyāna works that the Buddha's teachings were often exercises in "skillful means" (*upāya-kauśalya*), provisional teachings directed to a specific individual or group. These schools, however, typically held that a single scripture or class of scriptures represents his ultimate teaching and thus deserve preeminent status in the canon.

There were a number of communities that were based upon a single scripture. Three were based on works produced by the early Buddhist sects, namely the Discipline School (Lu zong 律宗; Jpn. Ritsu-shū), which focused upon the *Vinaya* literature as its central

scripture; and the Treasury School (Jushe zong 俱舍宗; Jpn. Kusha-shū), based on Vasubandhu's (ca. fourth century) *Commentary on the Treasury of Higher Doctrine* (*Abhidharma-kośa-bhāṣya*), which is a summary of the Vaibhāṣika-Sarvāstivādin sect of early Buddhism, and the "Establishing the Truth" School (*Satyasiddhi*; Chengshi zong 成實宗; Jpn. Jōjitsu-shū), whose main source was the *Establishing the Truth Treatise* (*Satyasiddhiśāstra*) composed by the Indian Sautrāntika master Harivarman (ca. seventh century).

There also arose in China several schools that focused on Mahāyāna sūtras or the treatises (*śāstra*) composed by renowned Indian philosophers. These include the Three Treatises School (Sanlun zong 三論宗; Jpn. Sanron-shū), whose scriptural basis was three pivotal works of Madhyamaka philosophy. The Consciousness Only (Weishi 唯識) or Dharma Characteristics School (Faxiang zong 法相宗 Jpn. Hossō-shū) is an East Asian version of Yogācāra, established in China by Paramārtha (499–569 CE) and Xuanzang 玄奘 (ca. 600–664 CE). The Tiantai school (天台宗; Jpn. Tendai-shū), founded by Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597 CE), had the *Lotus Sūtra* as it central text. The "Flower Garland" or Huayan School (Huayan zong 華嚴宗; Jpn. Kegon-shū), founded by Fashun 法順 (557–640 CE), based its system on the *Flower Garland Discourse* (*Avataṃsaka Sūtra*).

While these schools were quite scholastic, they also had sectarian tendencies. Since each claimed special status for its privileged scripture(s) and associated doctrines, advocates of these lineages understandably sought to undermine the claims made by competitors. The "Consciousness Only" school, for example, was given the pejorative label "Dharma Characteristics" by one of its critics, the great Huayan master Fazang 法藏 (643–712 CE), who sought to portray Yogācāra teachings as provisional, and hence inferior. Its use by the school's opponents became so ubiquitous that the pejorative name stuck, following its disappearance in the aftermath of the Wuzong emperor's 武宗 (814–46; r. 840–46) infamous persecution of Buddhism in the ninth century. These schools also developed sophisticated hermeneutical systems to advance their respective claims that their key teachings, and the scripture(s) they valorized, are the Buddha's ultimate or highest teaching.

The Pure Land school (Jingtu zong 淨土宗; Jpn. Jōdo-shū) is another sect that focused on a specific set of scriptures as well as a key practice. The basis of this school's teachings is a group of three treatises that discuss the Buddha Amitābha and the heaven he created (see the chapter by Jones in this volume). Pure Land scriptures were introduced to China as early as the second century CE and developed into a distinct school through the efforts of several "patriarchs," most notably Tanluan 曇鸞 (476–542) and Shandao 善導 (613–81). Its proponents claimed that the world had descended into the final "end time" (*moshi* 世末) predicted in some Indian Buddhist scriptures, the period in which the Buddha's teachings are destroyed. Shandao was convinced that he lived during this end time and that the true teachings of the Buddha were either lost or inextricably mixed with "false" doctrines. Thus it is no longer possible to liberate oneself; one can only rely on the power of Amitābha Buddha, who vowed to liberate any being who merely recites his name with faith. Shandao and other advocates of the Pure Land tradition, however, believed that their scriptures were in fact true teachings and portrayed their sect as the only remaining valid Buddhist faith.

The notion that the world has arrived at the end-time was also a key belief of another Buddhist sect that arose during the mid-first millennium, the "Three Levels" School (Sanjiejiao 三階教), founded by Xinxing 信行 (540–594). Xinxing believed, following the old prophesies, that the Buddha's teaching goes through three stages of decline: the "True Teaching," "Mixed Teaching," and a final stage in which it is destroyed (see the chapter by

Hubbard in this volume). Xinxing held that humanity has entered the final "end-time" its spiritual capacity has deteriorated. Nonetheless, Xinxing taught that all beings possess buddha-nature and will eventually achieve awakening. In the degenerate era, this involves the practice of "recognizing the evil" present in oneself and "cultivating respect" for others, who should be valued for their inherent buddha-nature. This led to the somewhat radical conclusion that due to the end-time's immersion in ignorance it is no longer possible to distinguish truth and falsehood, good and evil. Hence, the practitioner should bow down to everyone he encounters, in order to honor his innate potential for awakening. Advocates of Three Levels criticized other Buddhist schools for continuing to make distinctions regarding matters such as true and false teachings, moral and immoral conduct, etc. These ideas were promulgated by the sect's main scripture, the *Buddhadharma of the Three Levels* (*Sanjie Fofa* 三階佛法).

This group became quite popular and influential due to the massive "Inexhaustible Treasury" that it amassed from donations from the laity, including powerful aristocrats and even several emperors. It used the donated funds for charitable works as well as temple construction and restoration. It also became in effect a financial institution, extending loans to lay devotees.

Three Levels was targeted for critique by rival orders, but these may have been instigated by some of the claims made by some of its sectarians. Masters of this school critiqued the notion that authentic Buddhist teachings remain in the world and criticized those who believed that the *Lotus Sūtra* is an authentic discourse. They also pointed out the contradiction in the claim made by Pure Land adherents that humanity has reached the "end-time," while nonetheless insisting on the veracity of its own sūtras. The Three Levels sect was in turn attacked by advocates of the Pure Land school.

Ultimately, the challenge posed by this tradition to other Buddhist groups, as well as the great economic power it amassed, led to series of persecutions by imperial authorities, most notably by the Xuanzong Emperor 玄宗 (685–762), who in 721 ordered the seizure of the Inexhaustible Treasury and the redistribution of the sect's assets to rival Buddhist and Daoist institutions. He also disbanded Three Levels and banned its scriptures in 725. The conflict between Three Levels and its competitors, culminating in its dissolution by imperial authorities, appears to be an example of sectarianism triggered by doctrinal differences as well as competition for patronage and other resources.

The final two major Chinese Buddhist sectarian traditions developed during the Tang Dynasty (618–907) were Chan 禪 (Jpn. Zen: "Meditation") and the Esoteric Buddhist (Mizong 密宗; Jpn. Mikkyō 密教) traditions, both of which claimed to preserve a secret teaching of the Buddha that enable awakening in as little as one human lifetime. The Esoteric tradition was established in China during the early eighth century by the Indian masters Śubhākarasiṃha, Vajrabodhi, and Amoghavajra. It developed considerable prestige and gained imperial patronage by the mid-eighth century, but largely disappeared a century later as a result of the Wuzong persecution, at least as a sect with an institutional base. But aspects of esoteric ritual survived in China and continue to be practiced throughout East Asia. This fact has largely been ignored by scholars, who have tended to study Chinese Buddhism in an overly sectarian fashion, as Charles Orzech has argued (1989). Esoteric Buddhism persists as distinct sects in the Japan, in the Shingon-shū 真言宗 and Tendai-shū 天台宗.

Like the Esoteric Buddhist tradition, the Chan sect, which developed in China during the Tang dynasty, claimed to preserve a "special transmission outside of the scriptures," passed

down from the Buddha to his disciple Mahākāśyapa, and then from master to disciple to Bodhidharma, a legendary figure who was supposedly the twenty-eighth patriarch of Chan, and who according to tradition travelled to China to transmit the teaching in the fifth century. Bodhidharma is reputed to have taught a Chinese disciple, Huike 慧可 (487–593), who became the "First Patriarch" of Chinese Chan. The lineage transmission proceeded uneventfully until the time of the Fifth Patriarch, Hongren 弘忍 (602–75). During his tenure, there were two rival candidates for the position of his successor, Shenxiu 神秀 (d. 706) and Huineng 惠能 (638–713). A disciple of Huineng's, Shenhui 神會 (670–762), composed what became one of the most famous Chan works, the *Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* (*Liuzutan jing* 六祖壇經)*,* as part of his effort to win favor for the "Southern School" of his master. In this work Shenxiu and his "Northern School" are thoroughly disparaged, despite the fact that he was widely accepted as Hongren's successor and had received imperial recognition.

Shenhui began his attempt to popularize the Southern School in 745, but was banished by the Xuanzong emperor, apparently as a result of the intervention of an Imperial Censor who favored the Northern School. But he was invited back to the capital during the An Lu Shan rebellion (755–763) and succeeded in successfully establishing the Southern School. Shenhui was a consummate fundraiser and succeeded in amassing considerable support through the disparagement of his rivals; this conflict was primarily motivated by a struggle for patronage and was only superficially a dispute over doctrine and practice (McRae 2003: 54–56). Due to the success of his efforts, the popularity of the Northern School waned, and with it financial support. It disappeared entirely during the ninth century.

A relatively minor but historically important Chan sect, Baotang 保唐, based in Sichuan in Western China, was established by a master named Wuzhu 无住 (714–74). This tradition is historically important for its attempt to transmit Chan teachings to Tibet during the eighth century.

Chinese Chan, of the "Southern School" form that traces back to Huineng, flourished during the Song Dynasty (960–1279), and it in turn split into five schools. All contemporary Chinese Chan traditions derive from the most successful lineage, Linji zong 臨済宗 (Jpn. Rinzai-shū), founded by the master Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄 (d. 866). An additional school, Caodong 曹洞宗 (Jpn. Sōtō-shū) survives only in Japan.

Buddhism was dealt a major blow in China during the mid-ninth century, when Emperor Wuzong launched a major persecution of Buddhism and other "foreign" religions from 842 to 845. The motivations for this are complex and include the considerable hostility between Buddhists and Daoists that had developed by this time, as well as Wuzong's fascination with Daoism. Other factors that contributed to it include the considerable power and wealth of the major Buddhist sects at this time and their growing involvement in the government, as well as in institutional corruption; Buddhists colluded with eunuch imperial officials to profit from the sale of fraudulent ordination certificates. Some Buddhist monasteries were militarized during the Tang dynasty, and they raised armies of fighting monks who participated in several battles.

During the Wuzong persecution, monasteries and temples were shut down, their property confiscated, and monks and nuns laicized. This event dramatically changed the face of Buddhism in China; most of the sects ceased to exist, as their institutional infrastructure was completely destroyed. The groups that survived, and came to prosper, were the Pure Land and Southern Chan sects, in part because they were relatively marginal at the time, and hence less vulnerable to persecution. Chinese Buddhism became less sectarian, and was

also seen as less of a threat to the state; during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), it became quite common for Pure Land and Chan to be taught and practiced within the same temple. The "dual practice of Chan and Pure Land," advocated by the monk Lianchi Zhuhong 蓮池袾宏 (1535–1615), became increasingly common, and it continues up to the present day.

Sectarian tensions have not been notable in mainland China following the Communist revolution, in part due to the general suppression of religious activity by the government. However, Chinese Buddhist traditions are openly practiced in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and by Chinese communities in diaspora. There has been considerable growth of Chinese sectarian traditions during the twentieth century, especially in Taiwan. Some are syncretic in nature, drawing from the mainstream Chinese Buddhist traditions as well as Daoism and/or Tibetan Buddhism.

Korea and Japan

Buddhism reached Korea during the fourth century, and Japan by the sixth century via the Southern Korean kingdom of Paekche. Buddhism thrived in the unified kingdom of Silla (668–935), and it was the early Chinese text-based sects that were initially established there. Among them, Hwaŏm (Ch. Huayan) was particularly influential, such that its central text, the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, remains an important scripture in Korea up to the present day. In Japan, six schools of Buddhism were established by the Nara period (645–794). These were the Ritsu or Discipline School, the Kusha or *Abhidharma-kośa* School, the Jōjitsu or Sautrāntika "Establishing Truth School," Sanron or Three Treatises, Hossō or Yogācāra Dharma Characteristics School, and Kegon or Huayan. These schools were subject to a considerable degree of imperial oversight and restraint and were limited to the capital, Nara, as well as the provincial capitals. During the eighth century, however, the Nara schools, and most notably Hossō, became actively involved in politics and factional infighting. The sectarianism of the Nara period was characterized less by doctrinal conflicts and more by competition for influence and patronage by the increasingly confident Buddhist sectarian leaders.

The six sects of the Nara period went into decline during the subsequent historical period, the Heian era (794–1185). The downfall of the Nara schools was precipitated by an ambitious Hossō monk, Dōkyō 道鏡 (d. 772), an advisor to, and reputedly the lover of, the Empress Kōken 孝謙 (719–70), who appointed him to increasingly lofty positions in her government, culminating in the grandiose title "Dharma King" (*hō-ō* 法王). An effort to make him her successor to the imperial throne was thwarted, and he was exiled instead. These events led the Emperor Kammu 桓武 (737–806) to move the capital from Nara to Heian; he forbade Nara schools to move to Heian, indicating his displeasure with them.

These events created openings for both Saichō 最澄 (767–822) and Kūkai 空海 (774–835), two Japanese monks who travelled to China in the early ninth century to further their studies of Buddhism. Saichō studied with Tiantai, Chan, and Esoteric Buddhist masters. Upon his return, Saichō gained the favor of Emperor Kammu and was given permission to found the Tendai (Ch. Tiantai) School in Japan. Saichō was sectarian in nature and was strongly critical of the Nara schools, particularly Hossō, which was deeply out of favor at court. Using his influence, he gained permission to exempt Tendai monks from the government requirement that they be ordained in Nara, and he ordained them under Mahāyāna precepts (rather than the traditional *prātimokṣa* vows of monks and nuns) at Mount Hiei instead. This move was vigorously protested by the Nara schools, who understood that Saichō was attempting to undermine their power and influence.

Kūkai, like Saichō, travelled to China, and he became a disciple of the esoteric Buddhist master Huiguo 惠果 (746–805) in Chang'an. He returned to Japan in 806 and later gained the patronage of Emperor Saga 嵯峨 (785–842 CE), who appointed him the abbot of Tōdai-ji temple in Nara and head of the Sōgō, the government's Office of Priestly Affairs. He also granted Kūkai permission to establish a mountain retreat at Mount Kōya, which eventually became the center of the Shingon or "Mantra" school, the Japanese form of the Esoteric Buddhist tradition that Kūkai studied in China. In his relations with other orders, Kūkai took a subtle but nonetheless sectarian approach, arguing that the superior esoteric teachings are implicit in the "exoteric" teachings of the rival schools, but only the esoteric tradition has the proper hermeneutical tools to bring these teachings to light.

Pure Land teachings were introduced to Korea during the seventh century, and Tiantai and Esoteric Buddhist teachings during the eighth century. These traditions had considerable influence in Korea, but were not successfully established as long-lasting independent sects. It was Chan Buddhism, known in Korea as Sŏn, that ultimately became the dominant Korean tradition. Sŏn was introduced during the seventh century by the Korean monk Pŏmnang, who was reputed to have studied under the fourth patriarch of Chan, Daoxin 道信 (580–651). Numerous Koreans studied Chan in China during the Silla period, and later returned to establish practice traditions. The result was the founding of the nine mountains Sŏn sects during the Unified Silla period, each of which was named after the mountain on which the founder established a temple. Several of the masters of these sects manifested strongly sectarian attitudes toward other Buddhist sects. Both Toŭi (d. 825), the founder of the Kaji san sect, and Muyŏm (799–888), the founder of the Sŏngju san sect, argued for the inherent superiority of the Sŏn approach to practice over the older scholastic schools.

The Kamakura era in Japan (1185–1333) saw both rapid development of new Buddhist sects as well as an unprecedentedly high level of sectarianism. This period saw the rise of the "warrior monks" (*sōhei* 僧兵), armed and militarily trained monks who ostensibly had the purpose of defending their temples. Given the political instability of the time, preserving one's temple from being attacked and looted was a genuine concern, but at times these monks engaged in sectarian conflicts, such as during the fourteenth century, when there were a number of conflicts between Tendai and Zen monks. These were motivated by the Ashikaga shogunate's patronage of Zen, as well as the implementation of policies limiting the power of the established schools. These hit the Tendai school particularly hard, since it was one of the most powerful orders at the time, and it was thus the most active in resisting them. The Tendai temple of Enryakuji 延暦寺, in Kyoto, was particularly notable for its military force; it often fought with bands of warriors and commoners known as "single-minded bands" (*ikkō ikki* 一向一揆) that formed to defend Shinran's teachings, as well as with advocates of the Nichiren school.

The three most important Japanese Buddhist traditions – Pure Land, Zen, and the Nichiren School – developed during the Kamakura period. The Pure Land traditions were, and remain, the most popular of these. Although Pure Land teachings and practices had been present in Japan for centuries, particularly in the Tendai tradition at Mount Hiei, it did not emerge as an independent sect until Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212) founded the Pure Land School, Jōdoshū 浄土宗. Hōnen was originally a Tendai monk, but became convinced that *nenbutsu*, the recitation of Amitābha Buddha's name with faith, is the only practice that can result in salvation. Other sectarians, particularly from Tendai and Hossō, objected to his teachings and pushed for the government to ban them. As a result, in 1207 Hōnen was exiled, and several of his followers executed. His disciple Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263) broke

away from his master and founded the rival True Pure Land School, Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗, which expanded upon Hōnen's teachings, taking his doctrine of "other power" to its logical extreme. Lastly, a third Pure Land school, Jishū 時宗, was founded in the thirteenth century by Ippen Chishin 一遍智真 (1239–89), who actively disseminated the faith among common people living in rural areas and popularized the *nembutsu odori* 念仏踊り ("Recollecting the Buddha Dance"), which became a popular form of religious entertainment.

The two main Zen schools were also introduced during this period. Both were founded by Tendai monks who travelled to China and engaged in Chan meditation practice there. These include Eisai 栄西 (1141–1215), who established the Rinzai school in Japan, and Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253), who established the Sōtō school. During the seventeenth century, an attempt was made to import Lianchi Zhuhong's "dual practice of Chan and Pure Land" approach to Japan. It was successfully introduced by the Chinese monk Yinyuan Longqi 隱元隆琦 (1592–1673; Jpn. Ingen Ryūki), but due to the extreme sectarian nature of Japanese Buddhism at the time, it failed to ameliorate these tensions, and instead became established as a new Zen sect, the Ōbaku-shū 黃檗宗. It has remained one of the smallest Japanese Buddhist lineages, but it had considerable influence, primarily in the artistic realm. The calligraphy and ink painting of the early Ōbaku masters were much admired, while the sect itself was attacked in harsh polemical works penned by rival Zen sectarians. And infighting among the Zen schools continued until at least the eighteenth century, when Hakuin Ekaku 白隠慧鶴 (1686–1768) revived the Rinzai tradition. His writings are filled with scathing attacks on rival Zen groups, particularly Sōtō and a rival influential Rinzai Zen master Bankei Yōtaku 盤珪永琢 (1622–93), whom he accused of advocating "Do-nothing Zen." For example, he tells the story of a young woman who died and returned as an unhappy ghost. Her family was surprised, and asked her spirit why she was unhappy, given the fact that a Zen priest famed for his virtue conducted her funeral rites. Hakuin put in her mouth the following scathing critique:

> "Virtuous priest?" she replied. "What a lame joke that is. He and his endless talk of 'do-nothing silent illumination' Zen have led countless young sons and daughters to their ruin. Why, he himself fell into hell for his crimes. He is sure to stay here for a long, long time. He recently turned into a cow demon. Last time I saw him, he was pulling a blazing cart of fire. My ill-fated association with him was my undoing. Because of it, I, too, ended up in hell."
>
> (Waddell 1999: 5)

The implication here, that the advocates of this style of practice can lead their parishioners to hell, is a very strong claim, which was almost certainly intended to undermine their support from the laity.

One of the paragons of sectarianism in Japan was Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–82), a Tendai monk who was deeply concerned with the general lack of faith among the Japanese in the central scripture of his school, the *Lotus Sūtra*, and he blamed the new Pure Land schools for this. He trenchantly asserted that only faith in the *Lotus Sūtra*, and reciting its title (in Japanese), can lead to salvation. He strongly advocated this practice and composed polemical critiques of rival schools; he argued that Buddhists of other traditions were guilty of "slandering" the Buddha's teachings. He became an extremely controversial figure; he was exiled twice by government authorities, and several attempts were made on his life. He was infamous for his confrontational preaching style, which came to be known as *shakubuku*

折伏, "breaking" (*shaku*) delusion and "subduing" (*buku*) evil. Nichiren exclusivism reached a peak ay the end of the seventeenth century, when a schism developed in the faith, triggered by a demand by the shogun, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537–98), that all Buddhist groups participate in monthly memorial services for his deceased relatives. A more conciliatory faction agreed to participate, arguing that while it is was wrong to make offerings to nonbelievers, it is acceptable to accept offerings from them. But a more diehard faction refused, arguing that it is unacceptable to even accept offerings from those with "wrong views." This latter group became known as the Fuju Fuse 不受不施, "Neither Receiving or Offering." This sect, founded by the Nichiren priest Nichiō 日奥 (1565–1630), was outlawed in 1669 and was widely reviled.

Sectarianism gradually declined in Japanese Buddhism following the Kamakura period, reaching a nadir during the Meiji period (1868–1912), as a consequence of the Japanese government's persecution of Buddhism in its attempt to make Shintō the national religion. The Meiji government attempted to remove Buddhist influences from Japanese culture and weaken Buddhism by various policies, such as legalization of clerical marriage. This effort unified Japanese Buddhists and ultimately led to a revival and modernization of Buddhism in Japan, as James Ketelaar (1990) has argued.

The anti-Buddhist laws passed in Meiji Japan were also imposed in Korea during the Japanese occupation of Korea from 1910 through 1945. Generally speaking, pre-modern Korean Buddhism was not particularly sectarian, in part due to the anti-Buddhist policies enacted during the long Joseon dynasty (1392–1897), which made Neo-Confucianism the state religion. During the Japanese occupation of Korea, the colonial government established direct control of Korean Buddhist institutions and encouraged Korean monks to adopt a pro-Japanese attitude. They were encouraged to marry in the manner of the Japanese clergy, and married monks were generally appointed to leadership positions, as their willingness to marry was taken as a sign of a pro-Japanese political orientation.

During the 1950s, celibate Korean monks launched a campaign to "purify" Buddhism of Japanese influence. In this they were opposed by the married monks who had acquired ownership rights to temples. Control of temples became a serious political issue in Korea, due to its resonance with the postwar resurgence of Korean nationalism. The President of Korea, Syngman Rhee (1875–1965), sided with the unmarried monks. The conflict was at times violent; in their efforts to regain control of temples transferred to married monks by the Japanese, the Chogye order reputedly hired thugs to oust married priests from temples. This conflict ultimately resulted in the schism of the Korean Buddhist community in 1962 into two rival traditions, the celibate Chogye order and the smaller T'aego order for married priests.

Tibet

The Tibetan engagement with Buddhism began during the imperial period in the seventh century. The great Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo (Srong btsan sgam po, d. 650) built temples to house Buddha images brought by his Chinese and Nepali wives, Wencheng and Bhṛkutī. Later his descendent Tri Songdetsen (Khri Srong lde btsan, ruled ca. 755–97) played a much larger role in bringing Buddhism to Tibet. He was responsible for the construction of Samye (bSam yas), the first monastery in Tibet. To assist with this, he invited to Tibet first the great Mahāyāna scholar Śāntarakṣita (ca. 725–88) and, when the deities of Tibet obstructed the construction of the monastery, the tantric adept Padmasambhava

(ca. eighth century), who proceeded to subdue the deities of Tibet and bound them with oaths to protect Buddhism. He also invited a number of scholars, foreign and Tibetan, to begin the work of translating Buddhist scriptures into Tibetan.

Tri Songdetsen's reign also saw the development of what was likely the first sectarian conflict in Tibet, between advocates of Indian Buddhism and the Chinese Chan tradition. While Tibetans tended to look to India as the source of Buddhism, they also had strong contacts with China, and masters from the Baotang School, based in Sichuan on the border with Tibet, had begun to teach in Tibet, as is attested by the numerous Tibetan Chan manuscripts preserved at Dunhuang. Tibetan sources report that the king held a debate at Samye to decide which form of Buddhism the Tibetans would follow. The pro-India faction was represented by Kamalaśīla (fl. 740–95), and the Chinese faction by Heshang Moheyan 和尚摩訶衍, a Baotang Chan master. There is considerable doubt about the accuracy of Tibetan accounts of the debate, which were composed centuries later. However, their claim that Kamalaśīla was the victor accurately reflects the trajectory later taken by Tibetan Buddhism, which became steadfastly focused on India, and Tibetans consequently sought to facilitate the transmission of Indian Buddhist texts and practices to Tibet.

The scriptures translated into Tibetan, and teachings transmitted to Tibet during the eighth and ninth centuries – especially the special tantric teachings taught by Padmasambhava – became the basis of the lineage later known as Nyingma or "Ancient" (*rnying ma*). Following the collapse of the Tibetan empire in the mid ninth century, the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet was interrupted for over a century, resuming in the late tenth century. This began the period known as the "Latter Transmission" (*phyi dar*) of the Dharma to Tibet. During this period a number of Tibetans travelled to India, bringing back tantric scriptures and practice traditions. This led to the formation of a number of new schools. They include the Kadampa (*bka' gdams pa*), the original order of monastic Buddhism, which became distinct from the Nyingma when a group of monks took up the teachings of the great Indian saint Atiśa (982–1054), who travelled to Tibet at the invitation of a western Tibetan king, Jangchup-ö (Byang chub 'od). This tradition was renowned for its dedication to monastic discipline.

There were also three major "New" (*gsar ma*) traditions, which were dedicated to teachings brought from India from the eleventh century onward. The Sakya (*sa skya*) tradition was founded by Khön Könchok Gyelpo (Khon dKon mchog rgyal po, 1034–1102); it was renowned for a series of notable scholars, including Sakya Pandita (Sa skya Paṇḍita, 1182–1251), who negotiated an alliance with the Mongols and served as a spiritual advisor to the Mongol leader Kötan Khan (1206–51), leading to the "Sakya hegemony" that ruled Tibet for a century. The Kagyü is a group of loosely related schools based upon the siddha traditions of northern India. Most of them derive from the teachings of Marpa the Translator (Mar pa lo tswa ba, 1012–1097) and his famous disciple Milarepa (Mi la ras pa, ca. 1040–1123), who were renowned for their mastery of secret tantric meditation practices taught to Marpa by great Indian saints such as Nāropa. Lastly, the Jonang tradition was established by the eleventh-century Tibetan master Yumo Mikyo Dorje (Yu mo mi bskyod rdo rje, fl. early eleventh century). This tradition focused on the *Wheel of Time Tantra* (*Kālacakra Tantra*) and produced the renowned masters Dolpopa Sherab Gyeltsen (Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan, 1292–1361) and Tāranātha (1575–1634). Lastly, the Gelukpa (*dge lugs pa*) tradition was founded by the scholar and reformer Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa bLo bzang grags pa, 1357–1419). Tsongkhapa was renowned for his desire to reform monasticism, and this school largely absorbed the older Kadampa tradition.

A considerable amount of sectarianism arose among these groups. A number of Tibetan scholars of the "New" schools attacked the legitimacy of many of the older translations as well as the rediscovered "treasure texts" (*gter ma*) considered canonical by the Nyingma tradition, despite the fact that the New orders also accepted the possibility of newly revealed scriptures (Gray 2009) and included several within their canons. Scholars such as Sakya Pandita also accused the Dzogchen (*rdzogs chen*) and "Mahāmudrā of the Sūtra Tradition" (*mdo lugs phyag chen*) meditation traditions of the Nyingma and Kagyü traditions, respectively, of incorporating elements of the Chinese Chan teachings that were discredited at the Samye debate, as David Jackson has shown (1994). Such accusations were highly selective, and hence political, as Ronald Davidson has argued (2002: 209–10).

Tibet has also seen frequent involvement of religious traditions in politics, which has led to sectarian tension and conflict. The Sakya hegemony, which lasted from the mid-thirteenth to mid-fourteenth century, brought the Sakyapas into direct conflict with other schools. In 1285, the Drikung Kägyu sect allied with a rival Mongol faction, the Ilkhans who ruled Persia, and revolted against Sakya rule. The Sakyapas, with the assistance of their patron, Kubilai Khan (1215–94), suppressed the revolt violently, razed Drikung Monastery, and killed thousands of people. And the successor to Sakya rule, Changchub Gyaltsen (Byang chub rgyal mtshan, 1302–64), established the Pakmodrupa (Phag mo gru pa) regime, which was closely affiliated with the Kagyü order.

This led to a conflict between the Gelukpa hierarchs and the Rinpungpa princes of Tsang in western Tibet, who came to be the central power in the alliance underpinning the Pakmodrupa regime. At the end of the fifteenth century, Rinpungpa princes expanded into Central Tibet and initiated a harsh crackdown on the Geluk tradition, which was based there. This led to growing hostility between the Gelukpa and the Karma Kagyü order, which was favored by the Rinpungpa princes. During the sixteenth century, Karma Kagyü leaders sought an alliance with the Ming dynastic court in China, while the third Dalai Lama, Sonam Gyatso (bSod nams rgya mtsho, 1543–88 CE), cultivated the patronage of Altan Khan (1507–83), the leader of the Tümed Mongols. This alliance was secured when the son of a Tümed prince was recognized as the fourth Dalai Lama.

Tensions between these factions were further inflamed by the fall of the Pakmodrupa regime; the leader of the Tsangpa hierarchs (*sde pa*) who succeeded it as the ruling power in west and central Tibet, Karma Tenkyong (Kar ma bstan skyong, 1606–42), was a strong partisan of Karma Kagyü and enacted policies designed to weaken the Gelukpa, including seizing monasteries and other assets. In 1617, an armed group of Gelukpa monks launched a failed attempt to drive the Tsangpa out of central Tibet. And in 1618, the Tsangpa crowned the tenth Karmapa, Chöying Dorje (Chos dbyings rdo rje, 1605–74), the leader of the Karma Kagyü, as the spiritual leader of all of Tibet. In 1621, the Gelukpas were successful in pushing the Tsangpa forces out of Lhasa and were able to recover some of the monasteries taken from them.

Full-blown conflict between the two sides began in 1635, when the army of Gushri Khan (1582–1655), the leader of the Mongols allied with the fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Lobsang Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617–82), invaded Tibet and succeeded in overthrowing Karma Tenkyong and his allies by 1642. This resulted in the enthronement of the fifth Dalai Lama as the political and spiritual leader of Tibet. In his own writings, he justified this, portraying the war as a conflict between good and evil, and comparing it to the great battle for Sri Lanka narrated in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. In the aftermath of this war, the fifth Dalai Lama exacted revenge on rival sectarian groups. He seized monasteries and other

assets from rival schools and forced the tenth Karmapa into exile. The Jonangpa order, which sided with the Tsang hierarchs – and to which the Dalai Lama strongly objected for doctrinal reasons – was completely eradicated in central Tibet, surviving only in far eastern Tibet, along the border with China.

Sectarian tensions continued in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a fact that led to the rise of the "Non-sectarian" (*ris med*) movement in eastern Tibet during this period. While the Gelukpas reigned supreme in western and central Tibet, the eastern region was replete with a wide range of sectarian traditions. The so-called "Non-sectarian" movement, spearheaded by a group of masters from several lineages, sought an open and nonpartisan approach to the study and practice of Buddhism. While this was by no means an organized religious movement, it did lead to a spiritual revival, and, most notably, a renaissance of the Nyingma tradition, in eastern Tibet.

Sectarian tensions have decreased in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries as a result of the Chinese conquest of Tibet and suppression of Tibetan Buddhism, which united the schools against a common enemy. However, they persist in both subtle and overt fashions. Overt instances include the conflict triggered by the Dalai Lama's attempt to ban the public performance of rituals dedicated to the deity Dorje Shugden (rDo rje shugs ldan), a "Dharma protector" (*chos skyong*) that historically had been invoked against rival Buddhist sects. The Dalai Lama publicly urged Tibetans to cease propitiating Dorje Shugden as a tangible sign of nonsectarianism. However, the deity has strong partisans in the Geluk tradition, who have responded to this ban with violence. And several prominent Geluk leaders have publically broken relations with the Dalai Lama, most notably Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, a Tibetan scholar based in England, who founded the "New Kadampa Tradition," a breakaway sect of Tibetan Buddhism based in the West.

More subtle instances include the sectarian manner in which students are taught in Geluk institutions; as Georges Dreyfus has argued, the Geluk scholastic curriculum marginalizes the contributions made by other schools, which arguably limits the intellectual rigor of the tradition, since students only learn one position among contested philosophical issues (Dreyfus 2003: 322–23).

Finally, the contentious dispute over rival candidates for the position of the seventeenth Karmapa has both intra-sectarian and inter-sectarian dimensions. There are currently two candidates for the position of the Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje (O rgyan 'phrin las, b. 1985) and Trinley Taye Dorje ('Phrin las mtha' yas rdo rje, b. 1983). The former candidate is recognized by a number of Kagyü lamas as well as by the Dalai Lama, and he was recognized by the Chinese government prior his escape from China in 2000. But Shamar Rinpoche Mipam Chögi Lodrö (Zhwa dmar Rin po che Mi pham chos kyi blo gros, 1952–2014, the second highest ranking lama in the Karma Kagyü tradition) advocated the recognition of Taye Dorje. The disagreement has taken on a sectarian tone due to the seclusion for many years of Ogyen Trinley Dorje in the Gyuto Monastery near Dharamsala, a Geluk institution. He was detained there by the Indian government for political reasons, but this has angered his followers and advocates, whose access to him was severely limited. Rumtek monastery in Sikhim, which was rebuilt by the sixteenth Karmapa in the 1960s, became the site of conflict between the two factions, as monks supporting Ogyen Trinley Dorje fought off attempts by advocates the rival faction to install Trinley Taye Dorje as the Karmapa there.

In conclusion, it seems that the periods of heightened sectarianism in Buddhist history, such as in the Kamakura period in Japan or the seventeenth century in Tibet, are strongly

linked to periods of political instability that draw Buddhist traditions into political alliances and hence into conflict. However, it also seems that since Buddhist traditions have remained decentralized throughout their history, it is unlikely that sectarianism will diminish or disappear in the near future. On the contrary, it seems probable that the continuing differentiation of Buddhist communities will result in the rise of new sects in the future.

NOTES

1   I am indebted to John Powers for his helpful suggestions for the improvement of this chapter.
2   See for example, Wilson (1982: 91–92). His criteria seem rather narrow, insofar as they seem to presume a Western religious context, such as his insistence that they originate as protest groups, demand exclusive allegiance, and are necessarily lay groups with an antisacerdotal bias.

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COMMUNITY

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D. Mitra Barua and Mavis L. Fenn

INTRODUCTION

The term "community" can denote a variety of groupings, distinguished by one or more identifiers: location, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, occupation, or age to name a few. We accept the way our community does things as "the ways things are." We also believe that this is the way that things have always been, that the traditions of our particular community have remained stable. It is true that that each community has a fairly stable set of symbols and ideas, practices, and ways of relating to others both within and outside of its specific group. But the place of particular ideas and symbols within this framework changes over time. As Theodore Ludwig notes, symbols, for example, come to the fore and recede in response to changes in place and time (Ludwig 2006: 8-9). Most people are generally unaware of this, particularly with regard to religion. It is a shock when we encounter religious beliefs that are different from our own, rituals and practices that are "strange" or unintelligible to us, and communities that function in a way that diverges from our own. Prior to the modern period such encounters certainly occurred. The nineteenth to twenty-first centuries, with their increased access to travel, dislocations due to wars, ecological disasters, and globalization and technological advances accelerated these encounters. Immigration from Asia to North America is common. Relocation also means dislocation: culture shock, confrontation with a largely secular culture focused on individual rather than community values, loss of majority status, loss of extended family ties, economic insecurity, and a fear that the young will abandon their cultures and religious traditions.

In this article we examine how two Sri Lankan (Sinhalese) Theravāda Buddhist communities in Toronto, Ontario, one of the largest urban centers in Canada, have responded to these challenges, reinterpreting the Theravāda tradition in ways that both maintain and transform it. We will then broaden our focus, exploring how the experience of the Sri Lankan Theravāda communities in Toronto compares to that of some other Buddhist groups in Canada. Through an examination of language, education, and ritual we will attain a better idea of how communities define themselves through time and across cultures. Finally, we will ask how Buddhist communities in general "fit" within Canada's multicultural state.

CANADIAN MULTICULTURALISM

One of the primary challenges that any immigrant community faces in Canada is multiculturalism. Multiculturalism has been a part of the country's life since 1971 when Canada became the first nation to adopt multiculturalism as an official government policy (Canadian Heritage: Multiculturalism, May 23, 2008). It became enshrined in the Canadian Constitution in 1982 within a bilingual framework. In short, Canada has officially been a multicultural, bilingual society for about forty years.

Identity and participation are the hallmarks of multiculturalism. Immigrants are not required to abandon their collective identity. In her classic study of Asian Buddhist communities in Toronto in the mid-1990s, Janet McLellan noted that the removal of assimilationist pressures allows immigrants to sustain an ethnic and cultural identity that provides a sense of security in a new landscape (McLellan 1999: 192). Buddhist institutions provide a "collective memory" for Buddhist immigrants that form the basis for a redefinition of their identity (McLellan 1999: 195). Redefining identity is necessary as there are limits to multiculturalism. Collective identity, while protected by Canadian laws, must also accommodate itself to those laws (McLellan 1999: 193; Baum, public talk given at St. Jerome's University on May 14, 2008). Thus, it is multiculturalism that provides the framework for Buddhist thought and practice. Multiculturalism determines what traditions may be transferred wholesale, what needs to be adapted, and what should be discarded.

As Fenn has noted, the term, "multicultural," when applied to the official policy of a nation state such as Canada, has a far deeper meaning than simply providing a description of a country composed of various groups of people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds who share the same geographic boundaries (Fenn 2013: 198). It implies a national identity, and it encompasses every aspect of Canadian life: political, economic, linguistic, educational, as well as religious and cultural. In Canada, the Sri Lankan, Sinhalese Buddhist community is confronted with deciding what it can contribute towards a Canadian identity and then embracing that identity. Because Canada is a country of vast religious and cultural diversity, this requires a great deal of personal and community reflection and negotiation.

SRI LANKAN (SINHALESE) THERAVĀDA BUDDHISM IN TORONTO

Expanding the Community

The Sri Lankan Buddhist community in Toronto has been defined by ethnicity (South Asian or Sinhalese), language (Sinhalese), and religion (Theravāda Buddhist). Through a study of two Sri Lankan Buddhist temples in Toronto, D. Mitra Barua (2010) charted the ways in which this Theravāda community responded to the challenge of redefining itself in the face of radically changed circumstances. The factors its members had to consider were their minority status as Sri Lankan and Sinhalese and Buddhist in a predominately Christian Canada, the Canadian discourse of multiculturalism and the religious and cultural diversity of Toronto, and the individual and egalitarian values of North American culture. This need to adapt stands in tension with the desire to maintain traditional cultural values of respect and obedience to parents and religious figures, and care for the elderly in the second and subsequent generations.

Prior to mass migration, Theravāda Buddhism was woven into the daily lives of the community with Theravāda Buddhism being the majority religion of Sri Lanka. While Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam are a part of Sri Lankan religious life, they are religious minorities and their relations with the majority Sinhalese Buddhist community have been marred by ethnic violence with the Tamil community and renewed tension with Christian and Muslim missionaries after the 2004 tsunami and the 2009 defeat of the LTTE respectively. Migration to Canada, where Buddhists make up only one percent of the population, encouraged a broadening of the community, interaction between Thai, Bangladeshi, and Laotian Buddhists, and a sharing of resources such as monks who are able to provide services to several ethnic communities. For example, the Halton Peel Buddhist Society in Mississauga, a Sri Lankan Buddhist organization, sponsored a Bangladeshi monk trained in the Sri Lankan monastic tradition to serve the local Buddhist communities. Similarly, the Laotian temple in Kitchener-Waterloo, a medium-sized city in southern Ontario, sponsored a monk familiar with Sri Lankan worship (Barua 2010: 167). The result of this has been an expanded Theravāda community and a tempering of the cultural Sinhalese nationalist elements of Sri Lankan Buddhist practice that predominate in Sri Lanka, although the large Tamil presence in Toronto and Canadian multiculturalism are the primary factors in this tempering process. This expansion of community is not without its tensions, because temple boards are composed of the founding ethnic community, i.e., Sri Lankans (Laotians in the case of the Laotian temple in Kitchener-Waterloo). Such specific ethnicity-based administrative frameworks do not allow for full participation by the other ethnic groups, which fosters some resentment (ibid.). This is not surprising as minority ethnic groups are also concerned with ethnicity and maintaining culture.

Dealing with Other Communities: Multiculturalism, Religious, and Ethnic Diversity

Canadian multiculturalism is rooted in difference. The creation of a multicultural society is a process, one in which differences are not only acknowledged but respected, in which the common good emerges out of this diversity through participation in the collective. In other words, multiculturalism means that various groups may maintain their diverse identities, but they must share them as part of the development of a Canadian identity that draws on all these identities, creating attachment to country and a sense of belonging (Fenn 2013: 198). This can present a real challenge when, as noted above, people believe that the way "we" do things is the correct way.

The Sri Lankan Buddhist community has embraced this ideal with enthusiasm, as have other communities. This is best exemplified by the most recent Dhamma School curriculum developed by the Toronto community. Barua states that: "Dhamma education in Toronto promotes a multicultural discourse along with its spiritual discourse, and in doing so it replaces its predecessors' contingent discourses influenced by Buddhist nationalism and Christian evangelism in Sri Lanka" (Barua 2010: 81–2). The curriculum consciously sets out to transform children into good citizens and good Buddhists. The emblem of the West End Dhamma School is a maple leaf (Canadian symbol) with a white swan holding an *ola* leaf book in its beak. The swan is collaged into the maple leaf (Barua 2010: 93). The same material contains instructions regarding recognizing those who are religiously or ethnically different, looking for Buddhist values in their teachings, stressing the value of Buddhism in Canadian life and cultural conflicts, and explaining the relevance of Buddhism in Canadian life (Barua 2010: 108–9).

In 2006 and again in 2008 Fenn interviewed several Asian women in Ontario and Western Canada who were active in interreligious forums and coordinating information and activities between Asian and non-Asian Buddhists (Koppedrayer and Fenn 2006; Fenn 2008). All understood their Buddhist activities to be part of their participation in creating a Canadian identity. Immigrant Buddhists, then, see themselves as a community with something to offer the collective. They see themselves as a small group within the framework of a broader one.

From Majority to Minority Community: Secularism and the Reinterpretation of Theravāda Buddhism

The ways in which the community has responded to these challenges is evident when one examines the educational materials used to transmit the tradition to the second generation and the reinterpreted Buddhist concepts they contain, and in changing rituals and inter-generational negotiation.

Intelligent Adaptation

The term "intelligent adaptation" refers to the way in which Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto have met the challenges to tradition outlined above. First, Toronto contains a large population of Tamil refugees and immigrants from the civil war. Second, the Theravāda Buddhist community in Toronto includes Cambodians, Laotians, Burmese, Thais, and Bangladeshis, as well as Sri Lankans. These factors militate against any strong ethnic or nationalistic presentation of Buddhism. This also results in the downplaying of rituals and beliefs associated with the Sinhalese religious system, which includes a variety of beliefs in spirits and gods along with rituals associated with them.

The downplaying of these aspects of Buddhist culture in Sri Lanka, begun during the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Buddhist reform and revival period, gained impetus in Toronto due to the presence of a wide variety of religious traditions as well as the surrounding secular culture (Barua 2010: 80).

Other standard Buddhist practices such as *dāna* (religious giving) remain, but in modified form. While traditionally restricted to providing the necessaries of life for monastics, *dāna* has also been broadened to include fundraising for various social services and charities. In addition, in Toronto one has voluntary membership in a temple or temples. An increasing desire on the part of the young for more emphasis on meditational practices and a growing population has led to the development of temple specialization.

There has also been an increase in the involvement of women, especially in the realm of Buddhist education. While women played an important role in the reform and revival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, they carry considerably more authority in Canada than they do in Sri Lanka today. In Toronto, they make up the preponderance of staff in the Toronto Dharma Schools; and indeed the current version of the Dharma School curriculum, *Teaching Buddhism to Children* (2001), was written by Swarma Chandrasekere (Barua 2010: 99). By examining this curriculum we see clearly what Sri Lankan Buddhists have decided to maintain in concepts and rituals for the next generation and how deeply their presentation has been influenced by Canadian multiculturalism.

Figure 23.1   A Female Teacher gives instruction to Dhamma students participating in Vesak Celebration in a Vietnamese Buddhist Temple, Mississauga, Canada, May 2008.

Source: Sunday Dhamma School of West End Buddhist Temple and Meditation Centre, Mississauga, Canada.

Figure 23.2   Dhamma School Teachers and Students of the West End Buddhist Temple and Meditation Centre, Mississuaga, Canada, June 2008.

Source: Sunday Dhamma School of the West End Buddhist Temple and Meditation Centre, Mississauga, Canada.

Teaching Buddhism to Children, like its Sri Lankan forerunners, teaches children what it means to be Buddhist at a particular time and place. In this case, it deals with what it means to be Buddhist in a predominantly secular, individualist, and multicultural setting in which one's religion is in the minority. Elements of previous curriculums may remain: the response to Christian evangelism, Sinhalese nationalism, cultural concerns for preservation of respect for parents and religious figures; but they are subordinated to new interpretations of what it means to be a Theravāda Buddhist.

The Buddhism presented in *Teaching Buddhism to Children* is a reformist one whose underlying theme is inclusivity (Barua 2010: 141). Religious inclusivity is indicated by the provision of three concepts of God that encompass humanistic and polytheistic notions of the divine and includes one that echoes the Judeo-Christian religious concept of God (God Become) (Barua 2010: 148). A further description of the Buddha is a "State of Spiritual Perfection" (Barua 2010: 158). Here, the Buddha becomes totally depersonalized and, as spiritual perfection is attained through the "practice of religion," it becomes accessible by religious paths other than Buddhism. These reinterpretations provide a basis for teachings such as those noted above, respect for people belonging to other religions, and identifying where their values are consistent with Buddhist ones.

Along with religious accommodation, there is also secular accommodation. The five precepts (prohibiting killing, lying, stealing, sexual misconduct, and ingesting intoxicants) are reinterpreted as universal moral guidelines that lead to social harmony and realization of the goal of "Universal Good Will" rather than regimens to be pursued for merit in this life and in subsequent ones (Barua 2010: 151). The belief that Buddhism promotes religious and social harmony is strengthened through the reinterpretation of the eightfold noble path, the Buddhist way of life. Traditionally translated as "right perspective," "right thought," and so on, it is translated in the school curriculum as "Harmonious." Harmony is of great value in a pluralist society, and it does not carry the underlying moral judgment of right/wrong.

Another adaptation has been in the notion of community membership. We noted above that it has expanded, of necessity and with tensions, to a variety of ethnic groups and provides an identity more generically Theravāda than specifically Sinhalese or Sri Lankan. Far more radical has been the inclusion of gender neutrality and social equality, values espoused by North American culture. This is evident in the description of *sangha*, the community of Buddhists, where the monks and nuns are referred to as the sanctified component of the community. While there has always been a division between laity and monastics in Buddhism, there have not been nuns for some centuries, and many senior Sri Lankan monks do not accept the revival of the nuns' order. Furthermore, in the section entitled "Buddha's Attitude to Women" the psychic wonders of the nun Gotamī are described as equal to those of Moggallāna, who was renowned for his supernatural powers (Barua 2010: 155). This clearly reflects a desire to downplay the hierarchical and patriarchal elements of the tradition. While Buddhist modernism in Asia saw the laity invested with more authority, this authority hardly extended to teaching. It was and still is monks who provide leadership in the *dhamma* schools. In North America, there are schools even in areas that have no monks, and it is women who predominantly teach in them.

The scarcity of monks in North America has also led to variations in teaching the laity. In Sri Lanka teaching is far more formal, and rituals are performed as directed by monks, while in Canada the approach to teaching has changed from exhortation to explanation. In addition, more instruction is conducted in English, rather than Sinhalese. These adaptations

are prompted, in large part, by a desire to facilitate the transmission of the tradition to the second generation, who are far more culturally North American than Sri Lankan.

Community: The Next Generation

In the same manner as Theravāda Buddhism in Toronto has reshaped itself through cultural negotiation with religiously plural and secular Canada, so too it has been required to negotiate with the second generation. The first generation has been propelled primarily by communal values. Often separated from extended families, parents worry that the bonds between the generations will be abandoned. They worry about the loss of communal values, respect for parents, religious leaders, and the community from which they have come. The individualism of the West, which prioritizes personal interest, feeling, and reason, presents a tremendous challenge (Barua 2010: 182).

The Buddhism of young Sri Lankans is of the reformist type. For them, Buddhism is a "way of life" and a means to self-cultivation rather than the merit-making of their parents. They want to know the reasons behind and meanings of rituals before they perform them. They are not concerned with collective religiosity but with individual spiritual development. While they still respect the hierarchy of laity and monastics, second-generation Buddhists are more inclined to engage with the monks, which also reflects the monks' incorporation of social egalitarianism into their lay engagement. They have integrated Buddhist self-agency and North American individualism (Barua 2010: 203). Thus, like many Westerners who have adopted Buddhism, their practice includes traditionally monastic activities such as meditation and textual study. This can cause tension between the generations. While Pāli texts provide justification for traditional lay life, some young people view traditional practice as less valuable than the individual experience and meaning of modern practice (Barua 2010: 207–8). Born in North America, English-speaking with early exposure to religious pluralism and secular culture, young Buddhists do not find it difficult to separate Buddhism from Sri Lankan culture.

As most young Buddhists in the Sri Lankan community are English speakers and hold to a reformist interpretation of Theravāda, it is not surprising that there is a secular overtone to the newly emerging Buddhist identity. While there may be tension between Buddhist identities defined in ritual performance and the need to integrate Buddhist principles in everyday life, both continue to exist. Barua notes: "[A] new perspective and flavour are added to the Buddhist tradition" (Barua 2010: 240). Temporary ordination, less known in Sri Lanka but popular in Southeast Asian Theravāda, is a traditional practice meant to strengthen collective values. Experiencing first-hand the rigors of monastic life, temporary ordination is believed to build closer community ties, provide individuals with deeper insight into Buddhist teachings, and inculcate Buddhist values. It was adopted by the Toronto Sri Lankan Buddhist community to accommodate the needs of Bangladeshi Buddhists, and it highlights the aspect of personal development. Thus, it combines both, with the traditional communal focus shifting to the background and the individual focus coming to the fore.

Community: Blending Old and New

The adoption of temporary ordination by Sri Lankan Buddhists provides us with insight into the process by which communities not only adapt to a new culture ritually and ideologically

but also the way in which these adaptations are then exported to the originating culture in a cross-transformation. In the emerging pan-Theravāda community in Toronto, Sri Lankan Buddhists have been receptive to temporary ordination. And while it serves as an educational medium for laity, it also serves as a means by which second-generation Buddhists integrate traditional cultural values with their North American individualism. They adopt temporary ordination as a means to self-cultivation rather than as a means of merit-making. Combined with their desire to understand the reasons for various practices and their emphasis on meditation, their Buddhist practice is more like that of adoptive Buddhists than it is of the first generation. As Barua notes, this calls into question the scholarly thesis that there are two Buddhisms, one Asian (cultural and ritual) and one Western (individual, meditative, and non-ritual). We will have more to say on that below.

BROADENING THE HORIZON

The experience of the Toronto communities has some resonance with other groups across Canada. In British Columbia the Sri Lankan community and the Burmese community worked together to establish a presence. Rapid growth led to the creation of separate monasteries and the consecration of the Manawmaya Monastery in Surrey, and the ordination of eight novices was presided over by monks from other monasteries and included Burmese, Lao, and Sri Lankan monks as well as one Canadian (Placzek and Devries 2006: 8–9). The Sri Lankan Buddhist Vihara Society also has a *dhamma* school and provides Sinhala language training for children, and day retreats in English. The Burmese offer *dhamma* classes and *vipassanā* (insight meditation) classes in English for non-Burmese. This is also the case at some Buddhist temples in Ontario, for example the International Sangha Bhiksu Association branch temple in London, Ontario (headquartered in California). There Bhikshuni Suko Lien and two resident monks provide services for Vietnamese and non-Vietnamese, including chanting, meditation, talks, and *ōryōki* (応量器: mindfulness with bowl and food). The teaching occurs on different days (Koppedrayer and Fenn 2006: 65).

Swarma Chandrasekere, who composed the Dhamma School curriculum for the Toronto temples, and Bhikshuni Suko Lien are only two examples of the expanded roles for Buddhist women in Canada, both lay and ordained. Thich Pho Tinh at the Tam Bao temple in Montreal was the only nun in Canada leading Pure Land services. She also assisted in temple administration, teaches monks and nuns together, and sits on the Board of Directors (Boisvert 2009: 79, quoting Soucy 1994).

The examples from British Columbia listed above show a willingness to work with Theravāda Buddhists outside one's immediate ethnic grouping and openness toward including non-Buddhists in the broader circle of activities. But it cannot be said to represent active participation in the multicultural process. Indeed, Placzek noted that Kirthi Senaratne, a layman and the prime mover in the foundation of the Buddhist Vihara Society, encountered resistance when he encouraged the community to become involved in inter-religious dialogue and to adopt a more pan-Buddhist perspective (Placzek 2006: 8) as the communities in Toronto have done. This reflects the desire of some temples to make cultural preservation a top priority. In the case of some temples, it is reflective of difficulties that some monks may have with English.

The language issue is intimately tied to problems relating to isolation generally and youth retention specifically. The two key pillars of Canadian multiculturalism (noted above)

are identity and participation. That participation is publicly conducted in one of Canada's two official languages, English or French. The Rt. Honorable Adrienne Clarkson, former governor general of Canada and one of the founders of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship, states: "I have learned that one of the most daunting barriers to full integration into Canadian society is language skills" (http://www.teslontario.org/conference). Allophones (people whose mother tongue is not English or French) represent about 20 percent of the Canadian population, due largely to immigration (2007, 2006 Census: Immigration, citizenship, language). According to the Government of Ontario, 30 percent of the immigrants who arrive in Ontario speak neither English nor French, and 70 percent of those who do have "varying" proficiency (http:www.news.ontario.ca). While there are a large number of language programs, age is an important factor in language acquisition.

Parallel Communities and Multiculturalism

For many immigrants, culture and religion are inseparable. As noted above, the ability to preserve one's identity provides a safe harbor amid the chaos of dislocation for immigrants or refugees. For some, Buddhism may be a universal religion, but one that tailors itself to a wide variety of ethnicities. In 2006, when beginning a study of women in Buddhism, Fenn asked a young Chinese woman if her temple ever did outreach, that is, if it attempted to bring non-Chinese into their group. Surprised at the question, she responded "no," and asked in return why on earth a "Westerner" would want to practice Chinese Buddhism. For her and for the other women in the study, Buddhist practice was ethnically specific if one considers "Western" as an ethnic category. Both Asian and non-Asian Buddhists respected the practice of the other but felt the dividing line of culture (Fenn 2008: 175–76).

In the now classic *Old Wisdom in the New World* (University of Tennessee Press, 1999), Paul Numrich identified what he referred to as "parallel congregations," groups of Asian and non-Asian Buddhists sharing the same temple. The Asians came for cultural community, to make merit, and for ritual purposes. The non-Asians came for instruction in meditation and perhaps textual study and talks as well. Congregations rarely overlapped, usually only at Vesak celebrations, celebrations of the Buddha's birth, awakening, and death. While thirteen years have passed since its publication, the pattern tends to hold. Further, despite some cooperation with other ethnic Buddhist groups as in the case of the Toronto and the British Columbia Theravāda groups, there appears to be little interaction across ethnic or sectarian boundaries.

There is an assumption on the part of some in the broader community that there *should* be a type of Buddhist ecumenism, that Buddhists should be actively engaged across ethnic and sectarian lines, and that it should be more engaged in the multicultural endeavor. The fact that there appears to be little activity in this area apart from communal Vesak ceremonies is taken to mean that immigrants are not interested in integration or multiculturalism. But matters are far more complicated. Ethnic communities can vary not only by language but also by socio-economic and political differences. Are they farmers or accountants, urban or rural, rich or poor?

In the case of the Vietnamese Buddhists discussed by McLellan and Boisvert, are they ethnically Chinese or Vietnamese; do they come from the north or the south? It also matters if one came to Canada as an immigrant or as a refugee, and what 'wave' one came in as the reasons for coming to Canada have varied widely over time. Finally, this is the first time in history when all forms of Buddhism have been present in one geographic location. Until at

least the middle of the twentieth century Theravāda Buddhists in Sri Lanka might live their entire lives without meeting a Zen Buddhist. Having developed in relative isolation, monks – who are often busy attending to the laity – may simply see no reason for inter-sectarian dialogue, and language may be a limiting factor. Finally, recent groups of immigrants have always tended to stay a little outside the mainstream, gradually moving out over time (Banting and Kymlicka 2010: 54). Many Asian groups have been in Canada, for the most part, fifty years or less.

English (and French) are the vehicles through which Asian and North American Buddhists interact with each other and the broader culture. In a follow up to the study mentioned above, Fenn noted the importance of bilingual women in the development of Buddhism in Canada, bilingualism defined here as English or French *and* an Asian language. In Winnipeg, Manitoba, for example, a Sri Lankan lay woman, instrumental in establishing a *Dhamma* school for Sri Lankan children upon her arrival in Canada, has been active in organizing a communal Vesak ceremony in addition to the ones held by separate Buddhist sects, and she was active in the building of a *pagoda* constructed by the entire Buddhist community in Winnipeg (Fenn 2013: 198). While critics might argue that this is not evidence of Buddhist ecumenism, it does provide each minority Buddhist group with the recognition that it is part of a broader religious community and also serves to produce a higher profile for Buddhism within the mainstream. As noted above, she considers her participation in a range of inter-religious forums a means of contributing her Theravāda Buddhist values towards the multicultural agenda. Such bilingual Buddhists, many of whom are women, act as interpreters of Buddhism for non-Buddhist Canadians.

While there have not been, to my knowledge, detailed studies regarding the background of these men and women, anecdotal evidence suggests their presentation of Buddhism is reformist. Bilingual mediation is also reciprocal. In Hamilton, Ontario, a Caucasian Vietnamese nun who has a Dharma centre has assisted the local Vietnamese monks with language issues, fundraising, and in providing hospital chaplaincy for Vietnamese speakers. She, too, interprets Buddhism for the broader public through active participation in community events and the Canadian Buddhist Council (Koppedrayer and Fenn 2006: 69; Fenn 2008: 174).

Language affects the cultural and religious integration of Buddhist immigrants into Canadian life. If one is going to be a participant in forging a Canadian identity from the multicultural mosaic, one needs to be able to speak to the concerns of the different cultures and to articulate the values and ideas they wish to contribute. English (or French) is the medium through which most Buddhist-to-Buddhist exchanges outside ethnic lines are conducted. They are also the languages of the young.

Language, Second Generation, and the Blurring of Boundaries

Writing about Vietnamese Buddhism in Montreal, Mathieu Boisvert notes that many of the monks do not speak English and are limited in number. Their time is spent in ritual performance for the laity, leaving little time for their own study and education. Many second-generation Vietnamese speak English while the monks do not; they are highly educated whereas the monks are not; and so some second generation Vietnamese Buddhists do not respect the monks, seeing them more as service providers than religious experts (Boisvert 2009: 78–79). Still, as Boisvert notes, he spoke to a young Cambodian mother who brings her young daughter to temple events. She wishes to remember her community

in Cambodia and pass on to her daughter the values of generosity and caring she felt were an integral part of Cambodian community, whether or not her daughter becomes Buddhist (Boisvert 2009: 70).

Retention of Asian Buddhist youth is a pressing concern for those who wish to preserve their culture and religion, especially in the face of Western culture, which often seems the antithesis of traditional communal values. While various cultural and ritual practices faded into the background of a reformist Buddhism, some young Sri Lankans showed little desire to lose the ritual and cultural context of their parents. They wanted to understand the ritual, not dispense with it. They also valued the cultural patterns of family, as well as respect for parents and religious leaders. Given the parameters of Canadian multiculturalism, it is possible to retain both as Canada encourages maintenance of cultural identity in the belief that it promotes a sense of belonging in a pluralist society which, in turn, promotes civic participation and the development of a Canadian identity. One can be Sri Lankan and Canadian, Buddhist and a contributor of Buddhist values to the Canadian public forum. It would be unwise to speculate about whether or not other immigrant Buddhist communities will adopt the same strategies to retain their youth as the Sri Lankan Buddhists in Toronto because the needs of various communities vary greatly according to their circumstances as noted above, but there is the possibility of both maintaining culture and inspiring young people to continue received traditions.

It is fair to say that the adaptations taken by the Sri Lankan community blur the boundaries between "ethnic" and "Western" practice. Temporary ordination is similar to intense retreat programs provided by Dharma centres or programs such as the Maitreya Buddhist Seminary program sponsored by the Zen Buddhist Temple of Toronto. Founded by Korean Zen Master Samu Sunim, the temple caters to non-Koreans, and the Maitreya Buddhist Seminary program is intended to train people who wish to become dharma teachers (Campbell 2010: 188). Given the reinterpretation of Theravāda noted above that defines Buddha as "a state of spiritual perfection," do such reinterpretations go farther and erode the definition of what it means to be a Buddhist? And does that matter?

Studying Buddhism in Canada

In a provocative article, Lina Verchery chides scholars for a simplistic approach to the study of Buddhism in Canada. She states that, "if we try to describe Canadian Buddhism by looking only to those practitioners who go to temples and belong to lay groups, we will miss an important demographic of Canadian Buddhists" (Verchery 2010: 226). The trends scholars are missing are those of individualism, diffuse affiliation, and non-affiliation. Some Buddhists do not go to temples or join lay groups. There are people whose spirituality is heavily influenced by Buddhism, but they do not identify as Buddhist. For example, one in seven Americans admits that Buddhism has significantly influenced his or her religion or spirituality (Wuthnow and Cadge 2004: 363). They are non-affiliated. Finally, there are people who identify with more than one religious tradition, who exhibit diffuse affiliation. Census questions do not allow one to choose more than one religious affiliation, nor do they ask questions that are likely to draw out alternative responses. Scholars should not ignore this important demographic if we really wish to study how Buddhism is developing in the Canadian context.

This raises a host of problems for scholars, if not for the religious practitioners who may or may not call themselves Buddhist. While we cannot hope to address any of these questions

here, they are worth pondering: What is Buddhist activity; who is a Buddhist; and, most importantly, who has the authority to answer these questions? Vichery bases her opinions on her study of the Chinese Buddhist organization Fo Guang Shan's Woodenfish program for non-Chinese university students who are not necessarily Buddhist or religious. In light of the vastly different responses she received from students about their understanding of religion and religious identity, she states: "Buddhism in Canada is likely to evolve in a multiplicity of unanticipated ways" (Verchery 2010: 229).

There are other issues to consider in studying Buddhism in Canada. While some are methodological questions, it is important to consider them and think about what conditions we observe and how we interpret our data. Alexander Soucy raises a question regarding what we are looking for when we look for "Canadian" Buddhism. He notes that there are no "pure" categories of Buddhism such as "Chinese" Buddhism, that Buddhism has always been hybrid with continuous adaptation and borrowing from the beginning (Soucy 2010: 58). Along with Verchery, Soucy argues that scholars need to problematize our categories and definitions and, given Canada's historical stress on multiculturalism, "examine how these global transformations are taking place in a non-linear fashion through cross-cultural exchange, diasporic-homeland connections, and enormous breakthroughs in global communications" (Soucy 2010: 58).

Finally, there is the question of the size of Canada and the scope of Buddhism. Jeff Wilson has pointed out with reference to the study of Buddhism in the United States that scholars often make statements about "American Buddhism" based upon a few studies often from the same geographic area. But studies of other religions, including Christianity, have shown regional differences and have identified how conditions specific to a certain region, the frontier for example, led to the development of new forms of Christianity (Wilson 2009: 844). Given the size and scope of Canada and its regional variations, this is a promising approach for the study of Buddhism in Canada. Wilson sets out a four-point agenda: detailed studies of individual regions, how those regions affect the Buddhism(s) in that region, variation between different "built" environments (urban, rural, suburban), and regional variations in lineages or organizations. While these questions and issues will guide the study of Buddhism in Canada in the future, what can we say now about community, Buddhism, and Buddhism in Canada?

CONCLUSION

Canada is a community of communities. The framework for their interaction with each other is set by a multiculturalism that values equality, inclusivity, and participation. It is a largely secular culture but leaves room for religious identity. Because detailed studies on Buddhism in Canada are fairly recent and Canada is a large country, what we can say about the effect of Canadian policy on the adaptation of communities of Asian Buddhists is limited. One of the most recent and detailed studies formed the basis for this article, which also incorporated examples from other studies or personal encounters.

The Sri Lankan Buddhist community has consciously adapted to Canadian culture in a variety of ways: it has embraced religious pluralism, toleration, and notions of equality and gender neutrality. Further, it has interpreted its Theravāda tradition in ways that stress rationalism, individualism, inclusion, and aspects of nonviolence in Buddhism. Aspects of Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism have receded into the background, and the community has opened itself to Theravāda Buddhists from other ethnic backgrounds. More broadly, Sri

Lankan Buddhists have participated in Canadian life through engagement in community events, charity work, and a variety of multi-faith forums.

They have responded to the challenges posed by the second generation in creative ways. They have provided more services in English, talks on applying Buddhism to everyday life, and meditation classes; and while the hierarchy between monks and laity is still observed, the former are approachable for advice. Monks have adapted temporary ordination from other Theravāda practices to serve extended Buddhist communities and use it as a tool for educating the laity and for helping the laity with their spiritual self-development.

Expanding our focus, we learned that some Buddhist communities composed of more than one ethnic group build separate temples when their numbers have reached critical mass. Future detailed studies would be helpful in identifying the complex of reasons for this.

Language is a major issue. Inability to function fluently in English (or French) prohibits full participation in Canadian life and inhibits the ability of different Asian Buddhist communities to talk to each other. While this is not problematic from a Buddhist perspective, given the historic isolation of many of these groups, it does prevent them from raising the public profile of Buddhism within mainstream culture. This role belongs largely to bilingual Buddhists who organize public events and participate in inter-religious forums.

English is also the primary medium for the second generation, whose Buddhist practice is closer to that of "Western" practitioners than that of their parents. While their practice differs from that of their parents, many still wish to maintain cultural links to them. Does this then constitute a new category of Buddhists? It certainly does challenge former scholarly categories used to define Buddhist communities.

These scholarly issues are particularly important in how Canadian Buddhist scholars think about, talk to, study, and write about the ways in which streams of Asian Buddhism are adapting to the Canadian context, how Buddhism without an Asian cultural context is developing in Canada, and whether or not there will develop a Buddhism that is distinctly Canadian. Several scholars who have studied both streams of Buddhism have suggested that we need to approach these questions through a fresh lens and that it will be more appropriate to talk of a multitude of Buddhisms in Canada. That on its own seems very Canadian.

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THE BUDDHIST SANGHA
Buddhism's Monastic and Lay Communities

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Charles S. Prebish

INTRODUCTION: THE BUDDHIST *SANGHA*

In discussing the Buddhist community, "many scholars refer to Michael Carrithers's remark: "No Buddhism without the *Sangha* and no *Sangha* without the Discipline" (1984: 133). Thus, the growth of Buddhism into countries beyond its Indian birthplace, and its survival in those countries, required and was predicated upon the establishment of the *sangha* and its implementation as the basis of Buddha's spiritual family.

Despite the fact that the term *sangha* is used today in a more extended and comprehensive fashion than originally, referring to almost any community or group loosely associated with Buddhism, in the time of the Buddha the term was used in a radically different fashion. The Sanskrit word *saṃgha* (Pāli *saṅgha*) simply connotes a society or company or a number of people living together for a certain purpose. Akira Hirakawa (1990: 62) points out that political groups and trade guilds, as well as religious orders, were called *sanghas*. In the midst of many religious *sanghas* in the general wanderers' (*parivrājaka*) community, the Buddha's followers appropriated the term in a rather distinct fashion, one that gave their fledgling community a clear and unique identity. While outsiders may have referred to the Buddha's first disciples as *Śākyaputrīya-śrāmaṇas* or "mendicants who follow the Buddha," the original community referred to itself as the *bhikṣu-saṃgha*, or community of monks. Later, when the order of nuns was founded, it became known as the *bhikṣuṇī-saṃgha*, and the two units were collectively known as the *ubhayato-saṃgha*, the "twofold community." In Theravāda countries, this quite narrow usage of the term *sangha* has remained the predominant meaning of the word, as is pointed out by most modern scholars writing on the Buddhist community. Richard Gombrich (1984: 13), for example, says:

> The *Sangha* consists of all those ordained, both monks and nuns. In fact in the Theravāda Buddhist countries (Sri Lanka and most of continental Southeast Asia) the Order of nuns in the strict sense has died out. There are women in those countries who lead cloistered lives and behave like nuns, but for lack of a valid ordination tradition they remain outside the *Sangha* in the usual, strict sense. In those countries, therefore, the term *Sangha* is generally understood to refer only to monks and male novices.

Occasionally, in the early literature, the Buddha uses the term *cāturdisa-saṅgha* or the "*sangha* of the four quarters," but it seems clear from his usage that he still means the *monastic sangha exclusively*. Sukumar Dutt (1957: 60–61) says as much, suggesting,

> The exact import and implication of the phrase is somewhat obscure, but is indicative of the growth of a sense of unity in the scattered body of the Lord's Bhikkhu followers – a unity of ideal and purpose, though perhaps no union of corporate life and activity yet. The expression, "*Sangha* of the Four Quarters," became canonical; it is taken in donatory inscriptions of later ages to connote a conceptual and ideal confraternity.

Eventually, however, as the eremitical lifestyle deteriorated in favor of settled monasticism, the term "*sangha* of the four quarters" took on a new meaning. As Hirakawa (1990: 64) explains,

> A present order was governed by the precepts of the *vinaya*, but did not have the right to alter those precepts. The *vinaya* transcended the rights and interests of any single order. Moreover, although a present order had the right to use the monastery and its buildings, it did not have the right to sell them. To explain this situation, the existence of a higher level of the *sangha* was posited. It was called "the order of the four quarters" or the "universal order" (*cāturdisa-sangha*) and consisted of all the disciples of the Buddha. It transcended time and place and included all the monks of the past, present, and future; it encompassed all geographical areas; it continued forever.

Despite the fact that Hirakawa's statement greatly expands the temporal and geographic scope of the phrase *cāturdisa-sangha*, it is clear enough that only the Buddhist monastic assemblies are its constituent members.

Yet early Buddhist history records that the Buddha also admitted lay members into his community and that they eventually became a vital, symbiotic part of that community. Nevertheless, the lay community was initially considered autonomous to, and even distinct from, the monastic community. Thus, "the four groups of Buddhists were not referred to collectively as a single order (*saṅgha*)" (Hirakawa 1990: 60). How did this transformation from two distinct and autonomous groups (i.e., monastic and lay members) to a "fourfold *sangha*" of *bhikṣus* (monks), *bhikṣuṇīs* (nuns), *upāsakas* (laymen), *and upāsikās* (laywomen) evolve? Reginald Ray (1994: 21), in his explanation of the early model of Buddhist practitioners, is quite clear about the role of the laity in the early Buddhist tradition:

> On the one hand is the Buddhism of the founder, the Buddhism of the monks, marked by renunciation of the world and entry into the monastic *sangha*, decorous behavior as defined by the *vinaya*, the pursuit of the vocation of texts and scholarship, and the goal of nirvāṇa. On the other hand is the Buddhism of the laity, characterized by virtuous behavior and generosity toward monastics as well as by participation in the cults of the stūpa and of local deities. The laity practiced a compromised Buddhism and, in so doing, acted as a kind of buffer between the authentic Buddhism of the monks and the non-Buddhist environment of larger India.

Later, we will see that Ray divides the renunciant category into "settled monastic renunciants" and "forest renunciants," but the importance of this role for the laity, or what

Ray calls "the second normative lifestyle" (1994: 21) of Indian Buddhism, cannot be minimized. Although the goal of the lay Buddhist is *puṇya* or "merit," while the monastics' goal is arhantship or "liberation," the two communities are clearly interdependent, united in their spiritual kinship to the Buddha (see the chapter by Osto in this volume). To think otherwise, and especially so in the West, would be incorrect, as Gombrich (1984: 14) notes: "Buddhism is sometimes presented in the West as if the religion of the laity on the one hand and of the clergy on the other were discontinuous, completely separate. That is wrong." It is not hard to see, then, how the fourfold *sangha* of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen came to interpenetrate and become coincident with the *sangha* of the four quarters. In other words, it is possible to use the word *sangha*, in the broadest sense, to include all Buddhists. Étienne Lamotte (1988: 54) summarizes both the result and the process:

> The *sangha* or Buddhist community consists of four assemblies (*pariṣad*): mendicant monks (*bhikṣu*), nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*), laymen (*upāsaka*), and laywomen (*upāsikā*). The religious are distinguishable from the lay followers through their robes, discipline, and ideal and religious prerogatives. At the risk of being misunderstood. … Although both the sons of the Śākya, the monks and the layman represent divergent tendencies which, without coming into direct opposition, were to be asserted with increasing explicitness: on the one hand the ideal of renunciation and personal holiness and, on the other, active virtues and altruistic preoccupations.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE MONASTIC COMMUNITY

Tradition generally acknowledges that the Buddha spent forty-nine days in the vicinity of the Bodhi Tree following his experience of awakening. Eventually, he was persuaded to propagate the Dharma by a deity known as Brahmā Sahampati, and upon so doing, his first followers were two merchants who became lay disciples. The Buddha moved on to Benares, where he preached his first sermon to five old ascetic friends who had previously wandered around with him for six years practicing austerities. This initial sermon was followed by a second, and in short order the five ascetics attained nirvana. They requested both preliminary ordination into monkhood (called *pravrajyā*) and full ordination as well (called *upasaṃpadā*). The Buddha accomplished this with a simple exhortation of "Come, O Monk!" (*ehi bhikṣu*). Thus the monastic order was born, and within a short period it expanded rapidly and enormously.

The dramatic growth of the *sangha* required certain adjustments to be made in the formal ordination procedure for monastics, and over time the process became rather formalized. Monks were allowed to confer both ordinations, and the entire procedure was preceded by a threefold recitation of the following formula:

> I go to the Buddha for refuge,
> I go to the *Dharma* for refuge,
> I go to the *Sangha* for refuge.

Both the monks' and the nuns' communities were charged to wander continually teaching *Dharma*, settling down only during the rainy season when traveling about was simply not practical in India. Initially, the Buddha's plan for community life worked admirably. Monks

and nuns settled down during the rainy season in one of two types of dwelling: (1) a self-constructed hut known as an *āvāsa*, or (2) a donated hut known as an *ārāma*. In each case, furniture and requisites were kept to a bare minimum, and the monastic dweller engaged in serious study and meditation for the roughly three-month period of rain retreat confinement. As might be anticipated, within a short time after the Buddha's death, the rain retreat became institutionalized, expanding communal needs considerably, and the wandering ideal became largely a fiction in early Buddhism. Large monastic units developed, usually identified as *vihāra*s, and often catalogued by their location as "the Sangha of Vaiśālī" or "the Sangha of Śrāvastī," and so forth. Although the movement toward settled, lasting monasteries contradicted Buddha's injunction regarding settled permanent dwelling, it did provide the opportunity for the development of Buddhism as a religious tradition. And it was this social institution that was exported by various rulers in the Buddhist missionary enterprise. In time, the monasteries that developed in diverse Buddhist cultures became formidable units, serving as festival and pilgrimage sites and commanding economic and political, as well as religious, respect. Although the monastic vocation was by no means ascetic, in keeping with the Buddha's insistence on a "middle path" between asceticism and luxury, it was certainly a serious step that most individuals were not capable of making. As such, as we saw above, Buddhist history records that the Buddha also admitted lay members – male disciples or *upāsakas* and female disciples known as *upāsikās* – into his community.

MONASTIC LIFE

During the early history of Buddhism, the *sangha* existed as simply another sect of the community of wanderers known as *parivrājakas*. One custom that seems to have been observed by all these groups was that of suspending the wandering life during the rainy season. The Buddhists used this temporary settling down as a means to cultivate living together in concord, establishing careful rules for the observance of the rainy season (*varṣā*), and thus differentiated themselves from the rest of the wanderers' community by creating the rudiments of Buddhist monastic life. As we have seen above, Buddhist rainy season settlements were generally of two types: *āvāsas* or dwelling places that were determined, constructed, and kept up by the monks themselves, and *ārāmas* or parks that were donated and maintained by some wealthy patron. Later, when monastic dwellings became more fully developed, the term *vihāra* was expanded, and reinterpreted, from its earlier usage and eventually designated the whole monastery. In these residences, monks' accommodations were of the simplest kind. Most monasteries were built on the outskirts of towns and villages, so their close proximity to the town made alms procurement easy but provided enough isolation for the monks to pursue their meditative vocation undisturbed by the hustle and bustle of city life. The three months of enforced communal living quickly made a profound impact on the Buddhist *sangha*. Various institutions began to emerge to mold the *sangha* into a cohesive body. The recitation of the code of monastic law (see below) was adopted on a twice-monthly basis. The preparation and distribution of robes (*kaṭhina*) took on collective features, eventually becoming a distinct ceremony, as did the "invitation" or *pravāraṇā* held at the end of the rainy season residence and dealing with purity during the rainy season. Initial and full ordination procedures (*pravrajyā* and *upasaṃpadā*, respectively) were administered by the *sangha* rather than by individual monks. The monastery as a unit, however, was by definition a self-limiting institution at the outset. At the end of each rainy season the monks were to abandon the settlement and begin wandering once again.

Nevertheless, monks did tend to return to the same monastic residence year after year. Eventually, blending motivations of self-preservation and usefulness to their lay communities, monks ceased to wander at all. Thus individual *sanghas* grew up. Gradually, as the wandering life became a fiction, the Buddhists established themselves as a distinct group, bound by the teaching and discipline of the Buddha and committed to their own attainment of nirvana, as well as the spiritual uplift of the laity; but with the rise of distinct *sanghas*, the maintenance of commonality became acute. As each *sangha* became increasingly more individualized and removed geographically from other ones, the first seed of sectarianism was sown.

THE STRUCTURE AND DEVELOPMENT OF
THE EARLIEST MONASTERIES

With the institutionalization of the rainy season retreat, many communal needs for the monastic dwellings of the individual *sanghas* became evident, the most apparent being a common meeting hall. Sukumar Dutt (1962: 60) points out one example when a Brāhmaṇa named Ghoṭamukha, being eager to make a donation to the *sangha*, is advised by a monk named Udena to build a meeting hall for the *sangha* at Pāṭaliputra. Other buildings soon began to appear, strewn over the grounds of each settlement (Dutt 1924: 150–51):

1   Storeroom
2   Kitchen (literally "fire-room")
3   Warehouse
4   Privy
5   Place for walking about
6   Hall in the place for walking about
7   Bathroom
8   Hall in the bathroom
9   Temporary shed for special festive occasions
10 Well
11 Hall at the well

All of these structures were the collective property of the *sangha*. From this description we can conclude that the management and administration of the monastic settlement was no meager task. Sukumar Dutt (1924: 154–56), in working with the Pāli sources, prepared a chart that outlines the monastic hierarchy that developed in the course of time. I have condensed it here to indicate just how the division of labor was apportioned:

I   Permanent Officers
   A   Connected with the Commissariat
      1   Storeroom keeper
      2   Officer assigned to determine what is and is not allowable
      3   Apportioner of food
      4   Distributor of congee
      5   Distributor of fruit
      6   Distributor of solid food

   B   Connected with Chambers and Wardrobe
        1   Assigner of lodgings
        2   Receiver of robes
        3   Distributor of robes
        4   Receiver of bathing clothes
        5   Receiver of Alms bowls
        6   Distributor of trifles
   C   Superintendents
        1   Superintendent of workers
        2   Superintendent of novices
II Temporary Officers
   A   *Superintendent of buildings*
   B   *Distributor of robes*
   C   *Receiver of voting tickets*
III *Miscellaneous Officers*
   A   Officer in charge of drinks
   B   Officer in charge of vessels
   C   Steward
   D   Officer in charge of groves
   E   Officer of lodgings not in use

Given the physical structure of the monastic dwelling, with its growing number of buildings, and the expanding cohort of monastic officers, one clearly begins to get the feeling that what is being described is not a temporary dwelling for the rainy season, but rather a permanent residing place (i.e., a monastery) for the monks; and most definitely, this is exactly what happened.

   The three-month rainy season residence generally begins on the full moon of June–July. At this time, the *śayanāsana* (literally, bed and seat) or "dwelling" was assigned to each monk. A second time of assigning dwellings, however, is also mentioned in the texts. This occurs one month following the full moon of June–July. In other words, some monks entered the rain retreat later on the full moon of July–August. These late-arriving monks were accommodated by the later time of assignment. The two periods for assigning dwellings should more than adequately suffice to meet the monks' needs, since the rainy season dwellings were to be for one year only and were surrendered at the end of the rainy season on the full moon of October–November. Now, however, we find a most curious, additional, circumstance. Following the "invitation" (*pravāraṇā*) ceremony at the conclusion of the rainy season, there was yet a third assignment of dwelling places. The Pāli *Vinaya* refers to this time of assignment as "intervening" (*antaramukkha*), with reference to the *next rainy season*. Since assignments for the next rainy season could easily be accommodated at the time, this third time of assignment is functionally superfluous. The third assignment existed simply because monks did not, in fact, wander randomly, settling down with their friends and companions at the onset of the rains, wherever they might be at the time, but rather returned to the dwelling place of the previous year(s). With reservations already made one year in advance, they were assured of a satisfactory dwelling for the next year's rains.

   Once year-to-year assignments were established, it was only a short step for the monks to abolish their eremitical ideal altogether and cease their wanderings even during the dry

season. In this fashion the collective monastic life developed; a life requiring permanent physical structures and administrative officers, as described above. As the permanent individual monastic dwellings arise and proliferate, we even begin to hear of individually named *sanghas*, like the ones mentioned previously, and the original "*sangha* of the four quarters" seems to exist no longer. Apart from the obvious implications of these individually named *sanghas* for the eventual rise of the sectarian movement in early Buddhism, to call an *āvāsa* or *ārāma* a place of rain retreat would now be a fiction. In fact, they take on a new collective name – *vihāra* – but reinterpreted to no longer mean a single hut but rather a complete monastery. It is likely that the process of the emergence of the monastery took perhaps 100 years.

However, within a relatively short period of time, yet another transition took place in Buddhist monastic life. The *vihāra*s gave way to a new kind of collective term for monastic dwellings, referred to in Pāli legends as a *leṇa*. Sukumar Dutt (1962: 93) describes the *leṇa* in the following way: "A leṇa was not a monks' colony open to all comers: it was a compact unitary establishment for a settled body of monks, enabling it to function without disturbance as a corporate body – as a Saṅgha by itself." Of the five types of *leṇa* that seem to have originally existed, the term later comes to be specifically indentified with "cave" monasteries, cut into the hills by man rather than being natural structures. The cave monasteries, coupled with monasteries growing up around famed stūpa*s* or reliquary mounds, such as that of Amarāvatī, seem to dominate Indian Buddhist monasticism well into the Common Era, when large Buddhist universities began to grow up around large monastic centers.

GEOGRAPHIC DISPERSAL OF THE *SANGHA*

During Buddha's lifetime, his religion and *sangha* did not spread far. Most of his preaching was conducted in and around the great regions of Magadha and Kośala. Within Magadha three places seem to be most noteworthy. The first was the capital city of the region: Rājagṛha. Here King Bimbisāra's patronage resulted in the first gift of an *ārāma* to the *sangha*. Also in Magadha, Pāṭaliputra was later to become the stronghold capital of perhaps the greatest king of Indian history, Aśoka (r. 272–236 BCE). Besides these two cities, on the outskirts of Rājagṛha was Nālandā, later to become the seat of one of the most important early Buddhist universities. Magadha also marks the birthplace of the religion, as it was in Bodhgaya that Buddha's awakening was attained. In Buddha's early wanderings, he gained his largest group of followers in Magadha. Kośala, ruled by King Prasenajit, was most important for its capital of Śrāvastī, where Buddha received his two early patrons Anāthapiṇḍika and Viśākhā, and where he spent the last twenty-five rainy seasons of his ministry. Within the kingdom of Kośala was Kapilavastu, Buddha's home. To the east of Kośala and north of Magadha were several other kingdoms that, although they were strongholds of the Brāhmaṇical tradition, felt Buddha's impact: the Licchavis, the Videhas, and the Koliyas, to name a few. Also to the east was the region of Aṅga, mentioned occasionally in the early texts, as is the city of Kauśāmbī. The West and North seem to have been much less frequented by the early Buddhists. Consequently, we can see from the above that during its earliest history the Buddhist *sangha* spread within some rather closely defined limits. The wide dispersal of Buddhism, both within India and outside its borders, belongs to a period at least several hundred years after the Buddha's death and dates from the initial missionary enterprise of the great King Aśoka.

REGULATING THE MONASTIC ORDER:
THE *VINAYA PIṬAKA*

The *Vinaya Piṭaka* is that portion of the Buddhist canon regulating the monastic life of the monks and nuns. Properly speaking, though, a consideration of the monastic aspect of Buddhist life must be taken in broad spectrum, focusing not just on that portion of the monastic law that was canonized, but on *Vinaya* literature in general, thus affording us an opportunity to view the developmental process going on within the early Buddhist community in the first few centuries after the Buddha's death. For convenience, then, we arrive at the following schema (Prebish 1975: 10–17; Prebish and Keown 2006: 105–12):

> Paracanonical *Vinaya* Literature
> *Prātimokṣa Sūtra*
> *Karmavācanā*
> Canonical *Vinaya* Literature
> *Sūtravibhaṅga*
> *Skandhaka*
> Appendices
> Non-Canonical *Vinaya* Literature
> Commentaries
> Miscellaneous texts

PARACANONICAL *VINAYA* LITERATURE

Prātimokṣa

The *Prātimokṣa* is an inventory of offenses organized into several categories classified according to the gravity of the offense. Many scholars now agree that the *Prātimokṣa*, as a technical term in the Buddhist lexicon, seems to have undergone at least three stages of development: as a simple confession of faith recited by Buddhist monks and nuns at periodic intervals, as a bare monastic code employed as a device insuring proper monastic discipline, and as a monastic liturgy, representing a period of relatively high organization and structure within the *sangha*. We find the following classes of offenses within the monks' text:

1 *Pārājika dharma*s: offenses requiring expulsion from the *sangha*.
2 *Sanghāvaśeṣa dharma*s: offenses involving temporary exclusion from the *sangha* while undergoing a probationary period.
3 *Aniyata dharma*s: undetermined cases (involving sexuality) in which the offender, when observed by a trustworthy female lay follower, may be charged under one of several categories of offenses.
4 *Naiḥsargika-Pāyantika dharma*s: offenses requiring forfeiture and expiation.
5 *Pāyantika dharma*s: offenses requiring simple expiation.
6 *Pratideśanīya dharma*s: offenses that should be confessed.
7 *Śaikṣa dharma*s: rules concerning etiquette.
8 *Adhikaraṇa-Śamatha dharma*s: legalistic procedures to be used in settling disputes.

The nuns' text contains only seven categories, the third being excluded. The number of rules cited varies in the treatises of the diverse Buddhist schools, ranging from 218 to 263

for the monks and from 279 to 380 for the nuns. When the text was formalized into the *Prātimokṣa Sūtra* recited as a confessional at the twice-monthly *Poṣadha* or fast-day ceremony, concurrent with the new and full moon days, three new features were added: a series of verses preceding and following the text, praising the virtuous, disciplined life; an introduction used to call the *sangha* together and instrument the confessional procedure; and an interrogatory formula, recited after each class of offense, aimed at discovery of who was pure and who was not. Thus within a short time after the founder's death, the monks had provided themselves with an organizational tool for implementing purity in the monastic order.

Karmavācanā

The *Karmavācanā* is the functional, legalistic device by which the communal life of the *sangha* is regulated. We might say that what the *Prātimokṣa* represented to the individual monk or nun, the *Karmavācanā* represented to the *sangha*. At least fourteen *Karmavācanās* can be listed:

1 Admission into the order (*pravrajyā*).
2 Full ordination of monks (*upasaṃpadā*).
3 Holding the Confession ceremony (*poṣadha*).
4 Holding the invitation ceremony (*pravāraṇā*).
5 Residence obligation during the rainy season (*varṣopagamana*).
6 Use of leather objects (*carman*).
7 Preparation and use of medicines (*bhaiṣajya*).
8 Robe-giving ceremony (*kaṭhina*).
9 Discipline.
10 Daily life of monks.
11 Beds and seats in dwellings (*śayanāsana*).
12 Schisms in the order (*sanghabheda*).
13 Duties of a student and teacher to one another.
14 Rules for nuns.

All of these are handled under a general procedure called *sangha-karma* (literally, "an act of the *sangha*") arising either by a general requisition or a dispute. To be considered valid, the proper number of competent monks must be assembled, all absentee ballots gathered, and a motion (or *jñapti*) set forth. The motion is then read aloud or proclaimed (this is the *Karma-vācanā* or "announcing the action") and a decision, positive or negative, obtained. On the basis of the decision, democratically elicited, the *sangha* acts as a unified order.

CANONICAL *VINAYA* LITERATURE

Sūtravibhaṅga

The term *Sūtravibhaṅga* is literally translated as "analysis of a *sūtra*." Thus the *Sūtravibhaṅga* is a detailed examination of the offenses recorded in the *Prātimokṣa Sūtra*. As we should expect, the *Sūtravibhaṅga* has the same general categories of offenses as the *Prātimokṣa Sūtra*. Regarding each of the *Prātimokṣa* rules, the *Sūtravibhaṅga* has a fourfold structure:

(1) a story (or stories) explaining the circumstances under which the rule was pronounced; (2) the *Prātimokṣa* rule; (3) a word-for-word commentary on the rule; and (4) stories indicating mitigating circumstances in which exceptions to the rule or deviations in punishment might be made. In addition to the *Prātimokṣa* offenses, several new terms are found in the *Sūtravibhaṅga*: *sthūlātyaya* or grave offense, *duṣkṛta* or light offense, and *durbhāṣita* or offense of improper speech. These new terms were added because by the time the *Sūtravibhaṅga* was compiled, the *Prātimokṣa* had become fixed (that is, closed) with new rules considered inadmissible. To provide the flexibility of a situational ethics, the *Sūtravibhaṅga* expanded necessarily in this direction. Like the *Prātimokṣa*, there is both a monks' and nuns' *Sūtravibhaṅga*.

Skandhaka

The *Skandhaka* contains the regulations pertaining to the organization of the *sangha*. It functions on the basis of the acts and ceremonies dictated by the *Karmavācanās*. We might say that the *Karmavācanās* are to the *Skandhaka* what the *Prātimokṣa* is to the *Sūtravibhaṅga*. There are twenty sections in the *Skandhaka,* each referred to as a *vastu*:

1   *Pravrajyāvastu*: admission to *the sangha*.
2   *Poṣadhavastu*: the monthly confession ceremony.
3   *Varṣāvastu*: residence during the rainy season.
4   *Pravāraṇāvastu*: the invitation ceremony at the end of the rainy season.
5   *Carmavastu*: use of shoes and leather objects.
6   *Bhaṣajyavastu*: food and medicine for the monks.
7   *Cīvaravastu*: rules concerning clothing.
8   *Kaṭhinavastu*: rules concerning the production and distribution of robes.
9   *Kośambakavastu*: dispute between two groups of monks in Kauśāmbī.
10 *Karmavastu*: lawful monastic procedure.
11 *Pāṇḍulohitakavastu*: measures taken by the sangha to correct disciplinary problems.
12 *Pudgalavastu*: ordinary procedures for simple offenses.
13 *Pārivāsikavastu*: behavior during the *parivāsa* and *mānatvā* probationary periods.
14 *Poṣadhasthāpanavastu*: prohibiting a monk from participating in the *poṣadha* ceremony.
15 *Śamathavastu*: procedures to settle disputes.
16 *Sanghabhedavastu:* schisms in the *sangha*.
17 *Śayanāsanavastu*: monastic residences.
18 *Ācāravastu*: behavior of the monks (not discussed elsewhere).
19 *Kṣudrakavastu*: miscellaneous, minor matters.
20 *Bhikṣuṇīvastu*: rules specifically for nuns.

In addition to the twenty *vastus*, there is an introductory section discussing the Buddha's genealogy, birth, and life history up to the conversion of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana, and also a concluding part covering the Buddha's death, the council of Rājagṛha, the history of the patriarchs, and the council of Vaiśālī.

APPENDICES

Appendices are attached to several of the *Vinaya*s as a supplement. They serve two basic functions: providing summaries of the rules found in the *Sūtravibhaṅga* and *Skandhaka* and providing interesting bits of monastic history.

Non-Canonical *Vinaya* Literature

Fortunately, a wide variety of *Vinaya* commentaries have come down to us. These texts help to explain and expand the understanding of the rules and regulations by offering additional perspectives not included in the canonical texts.

THE LAITY

Many Buddhist scholars have pointed out that the basis of Buddhist spiritual life is merit (*puṇya*). For the male and female lay disciples, this merit could be cultivated in two primary ways. First, they could practice wholesome acts that created the attainment of merit or "good karma." But additionally, they could establish the monastic *sangha* as a special "field of merit" (or *puṇya-kṣetra*). By providing acts of giving (*dāna*) and generosity to the entire monastic community, they enhanced their own spiritual growth while supporting the religious professionals of their faith. In return for their support, the laity received wise counsel and *Dharma* instruction from the monastic community. It is no surprise, then, that the rigor of disciplinary rules for the monastic community is easily explained in the context of understanding the symbiotic nature of the monastic–lay relationship. Since the monastic vocation required a retreat from worldly life and an eremitic ideal, the individual monk or nun had to remain worthy of the highest respect in order to retain the support of the laity. For the lay community, ethical conduct was governed by adherence to five vows, generally known as the *pañca-śīla*: (1) to abstain from: (1) taking life (2) taking that which is not given; (3) sexual misconduct; (4) false speech; and (5) intoxicating substances. In some variants, this formula was expanded to eight and to ten precepts. Additionally, a number of famous discourses, like the Pāli *Sigālovāda-sutta*, regulate ethical conduct within the various relationships that occur in normal social intercourse. While the major focus of the earliest Buddhist communities, in various Asian Buddhist cultures, was clearly monastic, we will see later that Buddhism's globalization, and spread to Western cultures, yields a profound shift in emphasis from the monastic lifestyle as the normative, ideal pattern for Buddhists to a new and profound accent on the lay lifestyle as the more usual choice for modern Buddhists.

IMPORTANT DISCIPLES IN THE EARLY *SANGHA*

During the time period immediately following the Buddha's attainment of awakening, many disciples became an integral part of the early history of the Buddhist community. What follows is a brief mention of some of the most important disciples, classified under the headings of "Monks," "Lay Disciples," and "Royal Patrons."

Monks

Ānanda. Ānanda was the Buddha's cousin and was converted to Buddhism during the Buddha's visit to Kapilavastu. In the twentieth year of the Buddha's ministry, he became the Buddha's personal attendant and remained so for the rest of the Buddha's life. Most notable among his accomplishments were his recitation of all the *Sūtras* (the Buddha's sermons) at the first council after the Buddha's death and his role in helping to establish the order of nuns (*bhikṣuṇī*) by coming to the aid of the Buddha's stepmother Mahāprajāpatī, who became the first nun.

Upāli. Belonging to a barber's family, Upāli also became a monk at Kapilavastu, eventually becoming a master of the *Vinaya*, which he recited in total at the first council.

Rāhula. Following his awakening, the Buddha eventually returned to Kapilavastu to visit his family. At that time the Buddha's former wife Yaśodharā sent their son Rāhula to receive his birthright. Instead, however, the Buddha ordained the young boy (who was only seven years old at the time) as a novice (*śrāmaṇera)*. Rāhula is known as the chief of the novices.

Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana. Śāriputra was originally a follower of a wanderer named Sañjaya. One day he met a novice Buddhist monk named Aśvajit, who expounded the *Dharma* to him. Śāriputra immediately perceived the true meaning of the teaching and became an *arhant*. He then recited the *Dharma* to his close friend Maudgalyāyana, who also immediately became awakened. The two young men became monks and established themselves as two of the Buddha's closest and wisest disciples. Śāriputra is often associated with the *Abhidharma*, while Maudgalayāyana was known for his miraculous powers.

Mahākāśyapa. A very senior and highly disciplined monk, Mahākāśyapa was selected to head the first council, held at Rājagṛha in the first rainy season following the Buddha's death. He is reputed to have selected the 500 monks who attended and to have personally questioned Ānanda on the *Sūtras* and Upāli on the *Vinaya*.

Devadatta. Also related to the Buddha, Devadatta became a monk but, unlike the Buddha's other followers, was a threat to the *sangha* by constantly, toward the end of the Buddha's ministry, trying to usurp leadership. After several unsuccessful attempts to murder the Buddha, Devadatta founded his own order based on more austere religious practices. When his followers eventually left him to return to the Buddha's *sangha*, he coughed up blood and died.

Lay Disciples

Anāthapiṇḍika. He was a wealthy banker in Śrāvastī. After becoming a lay disciple, he built a monastery known as Jetavana, where Buddha spent the final twenty-five rainy seasons of his ministry.

Viśākhā. She was a banker's daughter. Born into a Buddhist family, she was eventually married into a family that followed a rival religious system. Although instructed by her father-in-law to support this new system and its followers, she rebelled, eventually bringing her father-in-law to Buddhism. She is known for having performed social services for the *sangha*, engaging in activities such as offering daily food for the monks, offering medicine to the sick, and providing robes for the monks.

Royal Patrons

King Bimbisāra. Bimbisāra ruled Magadha from his chief city of Rājagṛha. Having become a disciple of the Buddha after hearing a *Dharma* discourse, he built the very first monastery offered to the *sangha*: Veṇuvana *ārāma* (literally "Bamboo Grove Park"). He was responsible for the Buddha's adoption of the twice-monthly congressional meeting known as *poṣadha*. He was eventually caught in a court intrigue involving his son, Prince Ajātaśatru, and the murderous Devadatta and briefly imprisoned before regaining his freedom.

King Prasenajit. Unlike King Bimbisāra, Prasenajit, King of Kośala, did not give his unqualified support to the Buddha, although he did offer gifts to the *sangha*. Eventually, though, he became a Buddhist lay disciple and ardent patron of the religion.

SCHOLAR PRACTITIONERS IN WESTERN BUDDHIST *SANGHAS*

Stories reflecting the study/practice dichotomy are abundant in both the primary and secondary literature on the subject. Walpola Rahula's *History of Buddhism in Ceylon* provides a good summary of the issue (1960: 157–163). During the first century BCE, in the midst of potential foreign invasion and a severe famine, Sri Lankan monks feared that the Buddhist Canon (*Tripiṭaka*), preserved only in oral tradition, might be lost. Thus the scriptures were committed to writing for the first time. Nonetheless, in the aftermath of the entire dilemma, a new question arose: What is the basis of the "Teaching" (i.e., *Sāsana*), learning or practice? A clear difference of opinion resulted in the development of two groups: the Dhammakathikas, who claimed that learning is the basis of the *Sāsana*, and the Paṃsukūlikas, who argued for practice as the basis. The Dhammakathikas apparently won out.

The two vocations described above came to be known as *gantha-dhura*, or the "vocation of books," and *vipassanā-dhura*, or the "vocation of meditation," with the *former* being regarded as the superior training (because surely meditation would not be possible if the teachings were lost). Rahula (1960: 157–63) points out that *gantha-dhura* originally referred *only* to the learning and teaching of the *Tripiṭaka*, but in time came to refer also to "languages, grammar, history, logic, medicine, and other fields of study." Moreover, not the least characteristic of these two divisions was that the *vipassanā-dhura* monks began to live in the forest, where they could best pursue their vocation undisturbed, while the *gantha-dhura* monks began to dwell in villages and towns. As such, the *gantha-dhura* monks began to play a significant role in Buddhist education.

In view of the above, it would probably not be going too far in referring to the *gantha-dhura* monks as "scholar-monks." It is these so-called "scholar-monks" who would largely fulfill the role of "settled monastic renunciant," in Reginald Ray's (1994: 433–37) creative three-tiered model for Buddhist practitioners (contrasted with the "forest renunciant" and "layperson").

Why is this distinction so important? It is significant for at least two reasons. First, and most obviously, it reveals why the tradition of study in Buddhism, so long minimized in popular and scholarly investigations of the Buddhist tradition, has such an impact on that same tradition and has resulted in the rapid development of Buddhist schools and institutes of higher learning in the latter quarter of the previous century. Furthermore, it explains why the Western Buddhist movement has encouraged a high level of "Buddhist literacy" among its practitioners. However, it also highlights the fact that Western Buddhism in the modern

world has been almost exclusively a *lay* movement. While many leaders of various Buddhist groups may have had formal monastic training (irrespective of whether they continue to lead monastic lifestyles), the vast majority of their disciples have not. Thus the educational model on which Western Buddhists pattern their behavior is contrary to the traditional Asian Buddhist archetype. It is, in fact, the *converse* of the traditional model. As such, at least with regard to Buddhist study and education, there is a leadership gap in the Western Buddhist community, one largely not filled by a Western *sangha* of "scholar-monks."

What has been the response to the educational leadership gap on the part of Western Buddhist communities? Again, I think the explanation is twofold. One the one hand, there is a movement in some Western Buddhist communities to identify those individuals *within the community itself* who are best suited, and best trained, to serve the educational needs of the community and confer appropriate authority on these individuals in a formal way. Recently, the Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, son of Chögyam Trungpa and now head of the Shambhala International community, declared a number of community members "Acharyas," an Indian Buddhist designation for a respected teacher. These individuals were authorized to take on enhanced teaching and leadership roles in their community and beyond.

While there are a few communities where monks or nuns are in residence and the traditional Asian model is maintained, such as Hsi Lai Temple in California, most Western Buddhist communities are bound by necessity to follow the procedure utilized by Shambhala International. Unlike many Asian countries where Buddhist Studies is supported from within institutional religious organizations, Western scholars are not likely to benefit from enterprises that enhance the opportunities of their Asian counterparts, such as Sōka University in Japan. There is, however, another alternative, where the Western Buddhological scholar-practitioner is vital in the ongoing development of the Western Buddhist tradition.

It was noted above that in Asia monastic renunciants were almost exclusively responsible for the religious education of the lay *sangha*. On the other hand, virtually everyone who writes on Western Buddhism sees it almost exclusively as a lay movement, devoid of a *significant* monastic component. In the absence of the traditional "scholar-monks" so prevalent in Asia, it may well be that the "scholar-practitioners" of today's Western Buddhism will fulfill the role of "quasi-monastics," or at least treasure-troves of Buddhist literacy and information, functioning as guides through whom one's understanding of the *Dharma* may be sharpened. In this way, individual practice might once again be balanced with individual study so that Buddhist study deepens one's practice, while Buddhist practice informs one's study.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE *CYBERSANGHA*

In almost every one of the fine general, comprehensive books on Buddhism, not a single word is written about the role of computer technology in the development of the modern Buddhism. The earliest formal interest in the application of computer technology to Buddhism seems to have occurred when the International Association of Buddhist Studies formed a "Committee on Buddhist Studies and Computers" at its 1983 meeting in Tokyo. Jamie Hubbard (1995: 309), in his amusing and highly significant article "Upping the Ante: budstud@millenium.end.edu," pointed out: "The three major aspects of computer technology that most visibly have taken over older technologies are word processing, electronic communication, and the development of large scale archives of both text and

visual materials." Hubbard went on to relate his first experiences with IndraNet, an online discussion forum sponsored by the International Association of Buddhist Studies in the mid-1980s and co-managed by Hubbard and Bruce Burrill with equipment donated by Burrill. Apart from a small bevy of faithful participants, there was little interest in the forum, and it died a largely unnoticed death within two years. Nonetheless, of the three impact-items cited by Hubbard, it was clearly electronic communication that was to have the most important and continuing consequences for the development of American (and worldwide) Buddhist communities.

Early in the 1990s, a profusion of online discussion forums (or "e-mail discussion lists"), similar in nature to the one described above, began to proliferate and thrive on the Internet. Although these forums were global in scope, the vast majority of subscribers and participants were from North America. Now these discussion forums are too numerous to list, and many are sponsored by individual Buddhist *sangha*s worldwide as a means to maintain continuous, ongoing communication among community members irrespective of where they may reside. New terminology developed to capture the essence and function of these computer-based means of communication. One of the earliest pioneers of Buddhist online communication, Barry Kapke, referred to these groups as the "Global Online *Sangha*." Gary Ray, another early proponent of computer communities, coined the catchier phrase "*cybersangha*" to depict the bevy of online communities that were appearing. With the creation and expansion of the World Wide Web (or WWW) and the increasingly sophisticated technology that has accompanied it, there seems no limit to the expansive means of communication available to modern-day Buddhists. Many, if not most, Western Buddhist communities now have individual web sites, informing members of various aspects of the community's functions, but also serving as clever advertising occasions for new potential members. Files containing Buddhist teachings can now be posted, and transferred, among individuals and groups, with some of these even containing video and audio recordings of Buddhist teachers. Online databases have been created, capturing and archiving materials that document the ongoing histories of Buddhist *sangha*s and other materials pertinent to the continued growth of the Buddhist religion.

At the far extreme of the technological revolution are an increasing number of Buddhist communities that exist *only* in cyberspace, with no geographic component in real space. Some of these *cybersanghas* have had real impact for individuals who are geographically isolated from communities that exist in real space. By use of "webcams" and other devices, technology-based face-to-face communication with teachers can be offered, and Buddhist practice opportunities can be made available and monitored. On the one hand, it is possible to see technology and the *cybersangha* as the completion of the traditional Buddhist "*sangha* of the four quarters." On the other hand, this new development in Buddhist communication can be viewed as a true sign of the cold, rational, contemporary world in which communication is faceless and even impersonal. For many, the loss of face-to-face encounter, genuinely personal support, and practice shared in real space may be a strong liability that undermines the potential value of the *cybersangha*.

Perhaps the technological innovation that may have the biggest impact on the practice of modern Buddhism is the creation of "Blogs." Some North American Buddhists are already using the creative term "Buddhist Blogosphere." At the "Buddhism Without Borders" conference, held in Berkeley in March 2010, one of the best-received presentations was a paper entitled "Finding American Buddhism in Blogs," by a journalism professor from the University of Florida named Mindy McAdams (2010). In just a half-hour, she demonstrated

how thoroughly blogs had permeated the North American Buddhist landscape. While McAdams rightly notes that it's impossible to calculate how many Buddhist blogs there are because they come and go very quickly – even daily – there are some relatively stable ones, and they tell us quite a bit about how this new form of instant, and far-reaching, communication has influenced both the study and practice of North American Buddhism and Buddhism worldwide.

As an example of the finest Buddhist blogs in cyberspace, one can visit the site established by Reverend Danny Fisher at www.dannyfisher.org. Fisher is a young scholar-practitioner who earned a B.A. in 2001, a Master of Divinity degree from Naropa University, and is currently a doctoral student in Buddhist Studies at the University of the West. In addition to his blog posts, he also has links highlighting his teachers, causes he supports, his writings, interviews, and social networking communities. But most useful are his incredibly extensive lists of Internet sites devoted to Buddhist Chaplaincy and Caregiver sites, engaged Buddhism, publications and forums devoted to Buddhism and Buddhist Studies, and Buddhist booksellers and publishers. Without ever engaging in nasty dialogue, Danny Fisher provides North American Buddhists and Buddhist scholars with one of the most inspiring and useful sites in cyberspace.

Another Buddhist blogger named Brooke Schedneck (http://wanderingdhamma.wordpress.com) makes very clear in her blog called "Wandering Dhamma" how pervasive the Buddhist Blogosphere is. In a post on August 19, 2009, while writing about "New Trends in 'Western' Buddhism," she suggested that it is not just scholars who are directing to this new dialogue. She believes there is a closely-knit cybersangha community thriving on active discussions of a plethora of issues on an almost daily basis. And she backs up her claim by listing links to over twenty blog sites on her blog page, ranging from "Tricycle Blog" to "The Buddha is My DJ." Schedneck's argument is both inspiring and scary for modern Buddhist *sanghas*. Involving practicing Buddhists in an ongoing, daily dialogue about issues critical to their lives and practices would seemingly yield a result that could only be labeled as desirable. On the other hand, because these blogs are generally not moderated, and because those posting notes are not required to present any credentials that might assure accuracy in their statements, there is an enormous margin for error and hostility. As such, these resources must be dealt with carefully.

GLOBALIZATION

As Buddhism continues to globalize, the study of the worldwide Buddhist *sangha* has grown immensely. Moreover, the advances in technology mentioned above have enabled Buddhist groups to communicate not only across the regional boundaries in their own continents, but across continental boundaries as well. This is additionally important because the teaching lineages and communities of important ancient and modern Buddhist teachers have become worldwide enterprises. Global Buddhist dialogue among *sanghas* enables modern Buddhism to truly be involved in productive boundary crossing. Continental Buddhist organizations like the European Buddhist Union and the American Buddhist Congress can meaningfully see themselves as a part of worldwide Buddhist organizations like the World Buddhist Sangha Council or the World Fellowship of Buddhists. In an age of instant travel, Buddhists traveling worldwide can mouse-click their way through BuddhaNet's "World Buddhist Directory" and instantly find a *sangha* of their own sectarian affiliation in virtually any country on the globe. Better still, because of global Buddhist

dialogue, they'll know what to expect – within the limits of cultural and regional differences – in terms of practice, ethical standards, rituals, and so forth. When traveling, they needn't be a proverbial "*sangha* of one." Truly, global Buddhist dialogue helps to unravel the complexities of religious identity in an ever shrinking, but increasingly alienating world.

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CONTEMPORARY CHINESE BUDDHIST PRACTICE

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Scott Pacey

INTRODUCTION

In twenty-first century China, the Buddha is many things to many people: a socialist, a paragon of filial piety, and an environmentalist, to name a few. This is something of an achievement, because Buddhism's place in China is contentious. As the history of their debates tells us, Confucians considered Buddhism antithetical to their values. Monastics shave their heads, harming the bodies their parents gave them. They renounce family life, which is the training ground for cultivating benevolence. And they spend their unproductive lives cloistered away in monasteries, living as social parasites. As such, Buddhism was subjected to Confucian criticisms after its establishment in China – as the purported second-century text, *Master Mou's Treatise on Resolving Doubts* (*Mouzi lihuo lun* 牟子理惑論), shows (see Zürcher 2007: 13–15).

Tempestuous as this relationship sometimes has been, over the last century Chinese Buddhists have faced some of the most significant challenges in their history. These include confiscation of temple properties from 1898, an anti-religion movement in the 1920s, the scientism of Communism and Nationalism, and the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976. Underlying this history has been China's tumultuous engagement with modernity. However, the Buddhist response to these situations has helped give its practical repertoire its contemporary shape. This chapter is about that process of engagement and the end results as we see them today.

A significant aspect of Buddhism's story in recent Chinese history has been political. Since 1949, there have been two Chinas: the People's Republic of China (PRC), governed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and the Republic of China (ROC), which the Kuomintang (KMT), or Nationalists, governed until 2000. These differing political contexts have provided unique conditions for the evolution of Buddhism as a lived phenomenon. Any essay on contemporary Chinese Buddhist practice must, therefore, address the political and intellectual forces that have helped shape its existence – in terms of institutions, doctrinal interpretation, and praxis.

OVERVIEW

With this in mind, the present chapter has been divided into four sections. First, it outlines the religious and political context – from the late Qing dynasty (1644–1911) to the post-1949 period – in which Chinese Buddhists have practiced. It will also give an overview of these practices themselves. Having established this background, the second and third sections will extend our analysis into present-day Taiwan and China. This will be done through the eyes of an interlocutor: Jiqun 濟群 (1962–), a monastic from Xiamen's Minnan Buddhist Institute. Jiqun's experience in Taiwan and China brings together many of the individuals, organizations, and trends that presently define the parameters of Buddhist practice on both sides of the Taiwan Straits. Through his description, we will explore recent expressions of the Dharma and its articulation by prominent Buddhist representatives.

The concluding section of this chapter will show that despite the political divide that has existed since 1949, Chinese Buddhists have adapted to social and political conditions in which social engagement has been valued over renunciation. Although ostensibly they were evolving according to the ideals of Christianity, the "Three Principles of the People" (*Sanminzhuyi* 三民主義),[1] Marxism, democracy, and science, they have in fact responded to more longstanding tensions surrounding the presence of Buddhism on a Confucian landscape. For contemporary practitioners, Buddhist philanthropy, cultural activities, and meditative practices show that the Dharma is not just about practicing "deep in the mountains and in the forests" (*shenshan linnei* 深山林內). Claims that Buddhism cares little for the family, society, and the nation – the classic formulation of Confucian concerns enunciated in the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學) – are therefore baseless. While these activities in their current form are recent innovations, for adherents they represent a return to ways of being Buddhist that are faithful to Śākyamuni Buddha's true intentions after a wayward period of stagnation.

THE LATE QING AND EARLY REPUBLIC

In the late Qing, two developments in particular had implications for Buddhists in later decades: the rise of what Vincent Goossaert and David Palmer (2011) call "Confucian fundamentalism," and soon afterwards, a developing modernist discourse centered on the terms "religion" (*zongjiao* 宗教) and "superstition" (*mixin* 迷信). Both of these were loanwords from Japanese, which had, in turn, appropriated them from Western languages. While this latter debate gradually came to replace the Confucian fundamentalist position as that group lost its social influence into the twentieth century (Goossaert and Palmer 2011: 55–56), both discourses were influential politically and had a lasting, tangible impact.

In coming years, restrictions were placed on temple activities, and temples were forced to sacrifice assets to the cause of modernization. From 1912, after the Xinhai Revolution that toppled the Qing dynasty and brought the KMT to power, this included converting temple properties into schools, offices, hospitals, orphanages, old people's homes, or barracks (Welch 1967: 23; 26; 138–50). By consulting lists of temples appearing in gazetteers, Goossaert and Palmer (2011: 126) surmise that in the period between 1900 and 1937 half of China's temples were used for nonreligious purposes (see also Goossaert 2003; Goossaert 2006).

As they continue to point out, modernizers in the 1890s and early twentieth century – such as Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929) – were

not opposed to religion. The 1920s, however, did see the rise of an overt anti-religion movement (Goossaert and Palmer 2011: 51). This occurred after the calls of the student-led May Fourth Movement for science and democracy to sweep away Chinese tradition, visits to China by Bertrand Russell and John Dewey, and the increasing popularity of Marxism. In a 1923 chapter appearing in *The Chinese Recorder*, Carsun Chang (Zhang Junmai 張君勱; 1886–1969) described its core beliefs as being that "religion is out-of-date" and "is the product of primitive people"; that religion's "problems have been solved by science and philosophy"; that "religion is unfavorable to human progress"; and that "morality based on religion is passive" (Chang 1923: 463). For this rising generation, religion had no place in China's future.

Christian philanthropy, meanwhile, provided a model of social engagement that seemed to answer the charge of 1920s intellectuals, such as Liang Shuming 梁漱溟 (1893–1988), that Buddhism was not suited to modern life and that China should embrace Confucianism instead. In response, monastics moved to establish orphanages or schools in order to compete with missionaries (Welch 1968: 130). Despite the initial reluctance of Buddhist leaders to embrace these roles, such enterprises would characterize large Taiwanese Buddhist establishments in later years – when their outward appearance increasingly came to resemble the Christian social gospel with their television stations, medical facilities, schools and universities, and publishing houses.

In the last decade of the Qing dynasty and during the republican period of KMT governance on the mainland, sitting meditation or contemplation of a paradigmatic story of a past master (*huatou* 話頭) could be pursued for many hours each day in large monasteries. The schedule in these establishments also included liturgies, dharma-talks, meals, and circumambulations. Monastics enrolled in meditation sessions would both sleep and practice in the meditation hall (Welch 1967: 47–88). Alternatively, there was the recitation hall, where they focused on chanting the name of the buddha Amitābha (Ch. Amituofo 阿彌陀佛) while sitting or circumambulating, mentally reciting his name, and transferring merit to others – again for many hours each day (1967: 89–104).

Monks also earned money by performing rituals and, in some cases, divination. Laypeople would pay monks to recite a *sūtra* and transfer the merit to a deceased relative (Welch 1967: 188–202), and while it was rare for laypeople to meditate themselves, they might practice repetition of Amitābha's name (*nianfo* 念佛), visit temples, go on pilgrimages, donate funds to Buddhist projects, perform deeds aimed at accruing merit, free living beings from captivity or slaughter (*fang sheng* 放生), or recite discourses attributed to the Buddha (*sūtra*) (Welch 1967: 377–83).

Some monastics issued critiques of these traditional activities, considering their present orientation to be discordant with modernity. In 1928, Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947) outlined a new concept he called "Buddhism for human life" (*rensheng Fojiao* 人生佛教), in which he advocated socially engaged applications for Buddhist practice. (In 1933, he coined a new term for this: "Buddhism for the human world," or *renjian Fojiao* 人間佛教). For Taixu, Buddhism had lost its way. What Buddhists *should* be doing is actively working to benefit society instead of renouncing the world and pursuing individual awakening (Taixu 2005 [1928]: 597–98). He equated the five precepts (abstaining from harming living beings, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxication) with the Confucian moral code, thereby affirming core Confucian values (Taixu 2005 [1933]: 437–38). Individuals have a role to play in this new Buddhism by aspiring to become bodhisattvas. Rather than merely conceiving of them as distant, celestial beings, Taixu said that a "bodhisattva is a moral

agent who, on the basis of dharmic principles, goes out to improve society" (Taixu 2005 [1933]: 455). Likewise, for Taixu, the Pure Land is not merely a realm in the Buddhist cosmos, but represents an ideal state that can be established on earth (Taixu 2005 [1926]; see the chapter by Jones in this volume).

His student Yinshun 印順 (1906–2005) continued to build on this foundation (see the chapter by Bhikkhu Bodhi in this volume). According to his investigations of Buddhist history, Madhyamaka is the clearest expression of the Dharma, after which Buddhism became polluted by theistic elements that are distant from the Buddha's rational, anthropocentric doctrine (see Yinshun 2005 [1984]: 44–45). In other words, Yinshun sought to show that Śākyamuni had intended Buddhism to be "practiced" and "lived" by human beings (2005 [1984]: 45–47), which in turn would have positive individual and social results.

CHINA AND TAIWAN POST-1949

Whatever the internal dynamics within Buddhist circles may have been, traditional practices were disrupted when the CCP established a national government on the mainland in 1949. The Party's official stance was that religion would disappear as communism was realized. From 1951, most land held by the clergy was redistributed by the Party. Divination and performance of rituals for paying customers were banned. With the Anti-Rightist Campaign in the late 1950s, religious leaders underwent intensive political education. During the Great Leap Forward (1958–60), public religious activity was brought to a standstill. This continued throughout the Cultural Revolution, when Buddhist activity, outwardly at least, ended (Welch 1972: 355) or was driven underground (Goossaert and Palmer 2011: 159–65).

In 1979, however, Deng Xiaoping 鄧小平 (1904–1997) instituted reforms. Along with marketization and economic liberalization, these extended to the religious sphere and created new spaces for observance and practice. While the CCP remained officially atheist, religious activity was accepted so long as it did not conflict with state goals, was patriotic, and supported the Party (Miller 2006). The 1982 Party directive known as "Document 19" further explained that "religion will eventually disappear from human history. But it will disappear naturally only through the long-term development of Socialism and Communism, when all objective requirements are met" (MacInnis 1989: 10). The Party also reaffirmed the constitutional right of people to outwardly pursue a religious life (MacInnis 1989: 14).

Changes were taking place in Taiwan as well. Since 1947, the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China (Zhongguo Fojiao Hui 中國佛教會), or BAROC, had been the official representative organization for Buddhists in the KMT's jurisdiction. When the Law on the Organization of Civic Groups was passed in 1989, Buddhist establishments were able to engage with the government directly, rather than through the BAROC (see Jones 1999: 178–83; Laliberté 2004; Jiang 2000). This in turn allowed organizations that had already been gaining adherents and influence to identify specifically as Buddhist, paving the way for unimpeded expansion and a heightened social presence.

JIQUN IN THE "PURE LAND"

It was in this new context of openness on both sides of the Straits that in 1997 the young monastic Jiqun was returning home to China after a visit to Melbourne. On the way, he passed through Taiwan and recorded his observations of the Buddhist world he encountered

there. He later published these in the magazine *Fayin* (法音 *Voice of the Dharma*) – the journal of the Chinese Buddhist Association (Zhongguo Fojiao Xiehui 中國佛教協會 – the official representative body for Buddhists in the PRC).

While his travelogue is replete with insights into Taiwanese Buddhist practice, his assessments of the island's Buddhist establishments also provide a contrast with the Buddhist situation on the mainland at that time. Although Jiqun was an outsider to the Taiwanese religious landscape, he was closely associated with important aspects of its recent history. After Deng's reforms, Jiqun was one of the first graduates of the newly reopened Chinese Buddhist Academy (Zhongguo Foxueyuan 中國佛學院) in 1984, and he later taught at the Minnan Buddhist Institute (Minnan Foxueyuan 閩南佛學院) in Xiamen (Jiqun 2000: 36), which had once been headed by Taixu. Since many of the establishments Jiqun toured during his journey were founded on the philosophical basis laid by Taixu, he was well placed to comment on those that he saw – both as a monastic independent of them and as one familiar with their roots on the mainland.

He wrote that before his trip he had "met many Buddhist teachers who have come across from Taiwan. I frequently hear them describe Buddhism in Taiwan, and I have longed for an opportunity to see it for myself" (Jiqun 1998: 29). When he finally arrived, he was particularly interested in how closely the clergy interacted with society, in their philanthropy, their educational projects, and their open propagation of the Dharma. In these ways, Jiqun's observations would have contradicted a century of anti-religious discourse in China that claimed that Buddhism is un-modern and neglects worldly matters.

After his trip, which lasted two weeks, he wrote in the pages of *Fayin* about how impressed he was by Taiwanese Buddhists' level of integration with the surrounding community. He stated that "apart from the independent monasteries of various sizes in the mountains, forests, and cities, there are many temples inside buildings, [thus] forming a single unit with the social masses." In addition, they were extremely well organized, with a variety of public activities, creating "an innumerable variety of Dharma gates" (Jiqun 1998: 29).

He enthusiastically noted that monastics lectured outside in public spaces and that "tens of thousands of people participated." Indeed, he compared such scenes to Vulture Peak (Jiqun 1998: 29). This compliment was significant – Vulture Peak was the site of some of the Buddha's most important and popular discourses, and in the *Lotus Sūtra* it is conceived of as a Pure Land. By making this comparison, Jiqun implied that the assemblies in Taiwan were exemplary places for studying the Dharma.

He continued to note the abundance of opportunities for lay practice. Indeed, even in "remote, small places one may ask for *sūtra*s and books." Audio and video cassette recordings of Dharma lectures were "almost as common." Likewise, Buddhist training camps were held for students during their holidays. Buddhist television stations would "continuously broadcast the Buddhadharma, or would broadcast content related to Buddhism." Websites and libraries provided further opportunities to encounter the Buddha's teachings. Buddhist organizations published numerous magazines. He concluded that "if people in Taiwanese society want to hear the Buddhadharma, it is very convenient" (Jiqun 1998: 30).

Jiqun also learned that monastics actively propagated the Dharma in places such as prisons and the military, had established a telephone counseling service, advocated environmentalism, and countered critiques of Buddhism publicly (1998: 30–31). For Buddhists in Taiwan, the Dharma provided a foundation for making positive social contributions. Jiqun would have understood this as an expression of their practice in which

they emulated the bodhisattva – something Jiqun's intellectual ancestor, Taixu, and Yinshun had advocated half a century beforehand.

This was demonstrated by the Buddhist educational efforts that he witnessed. From 1949, Taiwan was the destination for numerous monastics leaving the mainland as the Communists came to power. Among them were many reform-oriented monks who had been influenced by Taixu, such as Yinshun, Xingyun 星雲 (1927–), and Shengyan 聖嚴 (1930–2009). The presence of such individuals in Taiwan had contributed to the foundation of what he apparently considered an enviable environment for Buddhist education.

Jiqun mentioned many Buddhist organizations in his report. Of them, four are predominant: Foguang Shan 佛光山, Ciji 慈濟, Fagu Shan 法鼓山, and Zhongtai Chansi 中台禪寺. Due to their size and the influence of their charismatic leaders, they have been called the "four mountains" (Jiang 2000: 106–9). The fact that Jiqun mentioned three of them more than any other organizations is unsurprising. The founders of the first three establishments – Xingyun, Zhengyan 證嚴 (1937–), and Shengyan respectively – had all at some stage studied under, or been influenced by, either Taixu or Yinshun. Jiqun wrote that Ciji "now has more than 4.61 million members" (1998: 32). The organizations' weighty presence in Taiwan's Buddhist world indicates that their socially engaged forms of Buddhism resonate strongly with practitioners on the island.

Jiqun also observed that numerous Buddhist establishments "have their own Buddhist institutes or research schools." As an example, he noted that "in many Buddhist institutes in Taiwan, they lead lives that are like a merger of the Saṃgha (Buddhist monastic community) and an educational institute." They could therefore retain clerical tradition, but also "adapt to modernity" (Jiqun 1998: 31). Thus

> in many Taiwanese Buddhist institutes and research schools, there is modern equipment. There are specialized computer rooms for the use of students. They can use the computers to do assignments, to write essays, to surf the Internet, and send emails. Among the graduate students at the Fuyan Buddhist Institute, each has his own laptop.
> (Jiqun 1998: 31)

Jiqun noted that in addition to the establishment of these modern educational institutions Taiwanese Buddhism had instituted a high level of academic respectability. The Fuyan Buddhist Institute (Fuyan Foxueyuan 福嚴佛學院) was founded by Yinshun who, although not without his detractors, was widely considered in both Buddhist and some academic circles to have been an exemplary practitioner, theorist, and scholar. For Jiqun, Yinshun's publications had strengthened Buddhism's presence in Taiwan and lent it validity in the eyes of an educated younger generation (Jiqun 1998: 31).

He learned that some Taiwanese monastics had studied in academic institutions overseas and then returned to teaching positions in Taiwan. He visited a number of Buddhist universities himself, and

> after listening to them explain the rationale behind the running of their institutes, I understood quite deeply the meaning behind Buddhist universities. Buddhist universities are not limited to just teaching the knowledge required by society but, more importantly, strive to cultivate students with robust ways of thinking and a noble character.
> (Jiqun 1998: 32)

Among them was the Ciji Medical College. He noted that "students wore the same uniform," that "one meal [there] only cost ten *yuan*," and that "there were courses on the tea ceremony, flower arrangement, calligraphy, painting, and Chan meditation. These molded the thoughts and feelings of students" (Jiqun 1998: 32). They held ten minutes of silence for each cadaver they dissected in anatomy class. Afterwards, these were "sewn up and dressed in clothes specially designed by Zhengyan. The bodies were then cremated and the ashes installed in the medical college" (Jiqun 1998: 32).

Students were therefore given not only professional training but were also instilled with the values of the organization and its founder, the nun Zhengyan. By inculcating these values in individuals so they embody the aims and values of Ciji, the organization seeks to gradually reform society. As one familiar with Taixu's corpus of writing, Jiqun might have recognized the parallels these institutes had with his unrealized hope of establishing an "international Buddhist Institute" (Pittman 2001: 128). This was a further example of Buddhist engagement with society and its response to the charges of critics; in this case that Buddhist scholasticism was dead.

Like the other organizations Jiqun visited on his trip, Foguang Shan was also committed to propagating the Dharma by providing opportunities for study. Jiqun noted that classes were held there for various categories of laypeople, including children and students. The institution sent people "to companies and prisons to propagate the Dharma" and broadcast "lectures on television." He mused that it was this kind of proselytization effort that had enabled Foguang Shan to increase its level of human resources and acquire a high degree of professionalization (Jiqun 1998: 32).

Xingyun had in fact begun holding "Sunday Schools" (*xingqi xuexiao* 星期學校) soon after his arrival in Taiwan in 1949 – a stage in his career that was characterized by his vigorous religious entrepreneurialism and the gradual increase of his prestige.[2] In 1954, he became director of the standing committee of the BAROC, and over the following years he visited prisons and journeyed around the island to promote the Dharma. He established a Buddhist chanting group for laypeople, a Buddhist kindergarten, and a cram-school for children. He began writing lyrics for Buddhist songs (Fu 1995: 68–69); in 1961, he produced a series of six Buddhist records and started producing radio shows (Fu 1995: 80). This evangelistic drive, fuelled by a desire to show how the Dharma can be related to daily life, was uncommon at the time but was clearly an application of the worldly engagement advocated by Taixu and Yinshun. Xingyun strove to show that Buddhist practice can take place outside the monastery, among laypeople.

His movement gained momentum in 1967, when the Foguang Shan complex in Gaoxiong formally opened. This subsequently grew to become one of the most influential Buddhist establishments on the island. There, pilgrimages, Chan retreats, and Dharma meetings are organized for visitors. The temple runs tours of the complex, and opportunities are provided for people to "take the eight precepts for a day." Foguang Shan also actively propagates the Dharma beyond the temple: it has a cable television station and publishes a daily newspaper called *Merit Times*. Its website (www.fgs.org.tw) states that it aims to actively spread Buddhism by "printing the canon, publishing different kinds of books, distributing newspapers and magazines, providing calligraphy, paintings, audio/video cassettes, records, audio/visual CDs/DVDs, and so on."

Many of these materials may be found at the Foguang Shan bookshop. There one will see annotated versions of popular *sūtra*s for sale; biographies of well-known Buddhists in graphic novel format; books for children; volumes on Buddhism directed at the adult

market; CDs and DVDs; and other forms of Buddhist paraphernalia. Each of these provides a different way to apply Xingyun's version of Buddhism to daily life.

Foguang Shan is also active in the educational arena: in Taiwan, it runs universities and schools. These efforts extend overseas; in 1991 it established the University of the West in California, and it plans to build a university in China. In 2005 the Foguang Shan-supported "Centre for the Study of Humanistic Buddhism" was established at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and it also opened the Nan Tien Institute in Wollongong, Australia (which offers tertiary degrees).

Aside from the universities and Buddhist institutes he visited, Jiqun was struck by the scale of Buddhist philanthropy, particularly in providing relief for the poor and for disaster victims. While he noted that Foguang Shan had a clinic and a roving medical bus called the "Clouds and Water Hospital" (Yunshui yiyuan 雲水醫院; Jiqun 1998: 32), he reserved most of his praise in this area for Ciji – and for its volunteer work, the aid projects it has carried out both in Taiwan and overseas, its hospital in Hualian, its clinics, and its bone marrow donor registry. While Ciji places less emphasis on meditation or solitary forms of practice, it sees philanthropic work as an embodiment of the bodhisattva path and represents the continued tendency toward social, lay-based forms of practice in Chinese Buddhism.

Reflecting Taixu and Yinshun's ideals, in Ciji – which was founded by Zhengyan in 1966 – the bodhisattva is strongly identified with worldly philanthropy. Members take Guanyin 觀音 (Skt. Avalokiteśvara) – a bodhisattva identified with compassion – as the inspiration for its philanthropy. The bodhisattva, rather than a salvific figure to call on in times of distress, thus becomes an exemplary model for social action, the emulation of which has become a mode of Buddhist practice. With this in mind, practitioners do volunteer work in Ciji hospitals, visit aged care facilities or long-term recipients of aid in the community, and collect material for recycling. According to the organization's website, this allows volunteers to "realize the noble truths of birth, old age, sickness and death; and formation, existence, decay, and emptiness" (www2.tzuchi.org.tw). Aside from the more immediate material results of their philanthropy, their aims are therefore cultivational.

Ciji has both the physical and organizational infrastructure to allow volunteers to pursue these modes of practice. After a lengthy fundraising effort, Zhengyan established its first hospital in 1986; its network of hospitals and medical centers has since expanded to six locations. Parallel to these efforts, Ciji volunteers are also active in disaster relief operations in Taiwan, China, and abroad. Its website states that it has provided aid in over "sixty countries. Apart from providing urgent supplies such as food, blankets, seed grain, and medicine to countries affected by disasters, we also help by building houses, schools, providing access to water, and providing volunteer clinics."

Buddhist clerics in China have long been associated with socially beneficial works such as building bridges (see Kieschnick 2003). Sponsoring Buddhist ceremonies or printing projects have also traditionally been seen as ways of gaining merit. However, while this may still be a motivation for participants in Ciji's philanthropic projects (Ding 1999), the nature and scope of their work is wider, and it is seen as a chance to develop compassion and wisdom while on the bodhisattva path. Jiqun saw in such work a means for dispelling erroneous notions about the Dharma – that it is "negative and pessimistic," and "not concerned with society." Noting that Christian "hospitals, educational efforts, and provision of aid for the poor have benefited many people," he urged his fellow Buddhists to increase their philanthropic efforts (Jiqun 1998: 32–33). In other words, Jiqun claimed that in its true

form Buddhism is like Christianity, at least in respect to philanthropy; however, this spirit had not been realized in China.

The view that Buddhist practice can take the form of socially beneficial work has a precedent in agricultural Chan – the view that one should recite Amitābha's name while working in the fields, rather than only in a monastery. This attitude has a number of sources. In Chinese Buddhist circles, Baizhang 百丈 (749–814) is now principally recognized as the developer of this ethic; that is, that monastics must be self-sufficient. His maxim – that "one day without work is one day without food" – is frequently invoked as evidence that Chan should be practiced in daily life (see Poceski 2010: 16).

While none of the monks Holmes Welch (1967: 217) interviewed in his survey of Buddhist practice in the first half of the twentieth century stated they had farmed themselves, at some centers in Taiwan after 1949 agriculture was seen as an opportunity for Buddhist cultivation. Notably, the émigré abbot Dongchu 東初 (1908–77), who had also been a student of Taixu, advocated agricultural Chan at the Nongchan Temple in Taipei. In turn, Dongchu's student Shengyan continued to promote the integration of Chan practice into the daily lives of laypeople until his death in 2009. Taixu, moreover, is known for having built on Baizhang's maxim to suggest that Chan can be combined with work – a view that became popular in China and received official sanction (see Ji Zhe 2004).

Like Dongchu, Yinshun, and Xingyun, Shengyan left the mainland in 1949, but he entered Taiwan as an army radio operator rather than as a monastic. (The first period of his clerical career was interrupted by his entrance into the KMT army.) Shengyan re-entered the clergy in 1959, and in 1989 he founded "Fagu Shan," or "Dharma Drum Mountain." In the 1970s while a postgraduate student at Risshō University in Japan, he was exposed to the burgeoning environmental movement. From the late 1970s and, especially after founding Fagu Shan, he travelled the world speaking widely, including at the United Nations in 2000.

Shengyan was a practitioner of Chan who also advocated Pure Land ideas.[3] In addition, he framed Buddhist practice using the language of environmentalism, thus making one's own efforts toward awakening and purification as urgent as solving the world's ecological problems (Dingmin 1996: 63). While this language and mode of expression are unique in Buddhist history, he did claim to be reflecting the Buddha's early concerns. As he pointed out, key events in the Buddha's life involved the natural environment. He was born under a tree; as an ascetic, he practiced in a forest; he attained awakening beneath a tree; and he first spoke on the Dharma in the Deer Park in Sarnath. In addition, he bathed in a river before he attained awakening, and when he became the Buddha it was likewise by a river. According to Shengyan, the Buddha also asked his disciples to practice in nature, and he himself used the Buddhist principle of interdependence to illustrate the relationships in ecological systems (Shengyan 2004a: 69–70). Buddhism therefore has a strong ecological basis.

Throughout the 1990s, Fagu Shan developed a system for integrating Chan practice into everyday life called the "Four Kinds of Environmentalism" (*si zhong huanbao* 四種環保). The first of these, "Spiritual Environmentalism" (*xinling huanbao* 心靈環保), is grounded in the notion (in the *Discourse Spoken by Vimalakīrti* (*Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*) that the world is already pure; our defiled minds, however, prevent us from seeing it as such. Another source of inspiration is the *Flower Garland Discourse* (*Avataṃsaka Sūtra*), which emphasizes the mind's role in the generation of karma. Shengyan considered mental purification to be essential for solving personal, social, and ecological problems (Shengyan 2004b: 4). The means for achieving this is Chan, which enables mental purification, the reality of non-self, and the interdependence of all phenomena to be realized.

Shengyan's "environmentalisms" involved other behavioral guidelines, which he also clearly enumerated. "Life Environmentalism" refers to living simply and frugally while conserving natural resources. "Etiquette Environmentalism" entails a range of Confucian and Buddhist-influenced behavioral codes that are intended to facilitate social harmony. "Natural Environmentalism" is directed toward the physical, natural world – since it is a venue for Buddhist practice, and because other sentient beings exist in nature, the ecosphere should be protected.

In Taiwan, Fagu Shan is also well-known for offering meditation classes and workshops such as "Chan weeks" (*Chan qi* 禪七) – seven days of meditation instruction. In the late Qing and Republican periods on the mainland, these sessions were offered only to monastics (see Welch 1967: 75–77); Shengyan, however, was instrumental in popularizing them among the laity. According to him, Chan facilitates mental purification that has clear, practical applications and thus should be made available to all. These benefits, however, are not limited to the individual, because meditative practices gain meaning as the premier tools in a social reformation that will resolve social and environmental crises.

In addition to promoting the Four Kinds of Environmentalism, Shengyan also introduced the "Fivefold Spiritual Renaissance Campaign" (*xin wusi yundong* 心五四運動), which is designed to streamline Chan practice and Mahāyāna morality into principles that can be applied in daily life (Shengyan 2001). This involves five groups of four guidelines for individual behavior (Shengyan 2001):[4]

1   the "four fields for cultivating peace," which are intended to bring peace to the mind (by lessening desires), the body (through hard work and frugality), the family (through respect, love and mutual help), and one's occupation (through hard work for the benefit of others and ensuring that "the three kinds of behavior" – actions, speech, and thoughts – are pure);
2   the "four guidelines for dealing with desires," which involve: regulating and moderating one's desires, as well as differentiating between "what is needed," "what is wanted," "what should be wanted," and "what can be wanted";
3   the "four steps for handling a problem," which include: "facing it," "accepting it," "managing it," "and letting go of it";
4   the "four practices for helping oneself and others," which consist of: "being thankful," "thanking others," "being moved," and "moving others"; and
5   the "four ways to cultivate blessings," which involve "recognizing blessings," "cherishing blessings, "increasing blessings," and "planting blessings."

Making these guidelines the foundation of one's life, according to Shengyan, will lead to purification of the self. If many individuals were to do this, purification would be replicated on a social scale. For Shengyan and Fagu Shan, Buddhism thus has clear social import, in contrast to what its detractors claim.

THE TAIWANESE FUTURE OF CHINESE BUDDHIST PRACTICE

Jiqun's trip took place in the context of increased religious contact between the PRC and the ROC, with representatives from Fujianese Daoist, Buddhist, and Christian organizations visiting Taiwan in the 1990s (Liu 2003: 174–75). In 1989, Xingyun himself journeyed to

China; he had been invited there by Zhao Puchu 趙朴初 (1907–2000), the president of the Chinese Buddhist Association (CBA). Jinghui 淨慧 (1933–), the editor of *Fayin* – in which Jiqun published his travelogue – was part of the delegation that accompanied him to several temples as part of that trip (Xie 1992: 112–13).

Like Xingyun, Zhao had been influenced by Taixu and was an advocate of the approach embodied in his "Buddhism for the human world" concept. At a 1983 meeting, this was accepted as the CBA's "compass," and in 2002 the CBA advocated Buddhism for the human world in its constitution (Deng 2004: 653). There was thus a clear recognition of the concept's usefulness among principal actors in Jiqun's Buddhist world.

Another of his superiors, Shenghui 聖輝 (1951–), became abbot of the Minnan Buddhist Institute (where Jiqun had a teaching post) in 1997 – the year he made his journey. Shenghui was a graduate of the Chinese Buddhist Academy, which according to Yoshiko Ashiwa (2009: 66) "is subject to strong political guidance by the Party and collaborates closely with it." It furthers the Party's desire to cultivate Buddhists who "in terms of politics, ardently love the motherland, [and] support the leadership of the Communist Party and the socialist system."[5] When Shenghui became abbot of the Nanputuo Temple in 1997, it was with CBA backing (Wank 2009: 142). In 2002 he became a vice-president of the standing committee of the CBA – and led a delegation accompanying a supposed Buddhist relic (a bone from one of the Buddha's fingers) to Taiwan.

According to Ashiwa (2009: 66), Shenghui "represents a generation, in their twenties to forties, that was mostly educated in the aforementioned China Buddhist Academy and understands completely the position of 'normal' religion in the state system and ideology." As Wank (2009: 126) explains, "'normal' religions accept Party leadership, work toward state goals, and are therefore 'patriotic.'" Shenghui "projected the imperious air of a cadre, and was, therefore, both respected and feared" (Wank 2009: 143). After becoming abbot, he represented Buddhists at a number of Chinese and international forums. In 1999, he spoke at a conference in Taiwan on Chan (Liu 2003: 176), which Jiqun also attended.

His hopes for the Chinese Buddhist Academy, from which he had graduated and of which was a deputy director in the 1990s, reflect the sorts of activities Jiqun saw on his trip, but also reflect Taixu's early ambitions and those of Zhao Puchu. Shenghui wanted to "cultivate scholar-monastics [with] the ability to adapt to the modern needs of Dharma propagation," to turn the Institute into "an international-level Buddhist university," to emphasize both Buddhist practice and scholasticism (including the study of Buddhist doctrine and languages), to send students overseas on exchange, and to embrace the educational opportunities offered by the Internet.[6]

This Taiwanese influence can also be seen in Jinghui's approach to Chan. Jinghui, who was the editor of *Fayin* when Jiqun went to Taiwan, advocates what he calls "Life Chan" (*Shenghuo Chan* 生活禪). This bears some similarity to Shengyan's model of practice, as well as those of other Taiwanese groups. As the president of the Hubei Buddhist Association, from 1992 he was instrumental in restoring the Bailin Temple outside of Beijing after its destruction in the civil war (Ji Zhe 2007: 152). It is from this temple that Jinghui now promotes Life Chan – an approach to practice that had proven popular, in particular, among the well-educated (Fisher 2008).

In a lecture on Life Chan given in 2001, Jinghui (2001) mentioned two Taiwanese groups as examples of movements that have brought Chan into the context of everyday life: Li Yuansong's 李元鬆 (1957–2003) "Modern Chan" (Xiandai Chan 現代禪), and another Taiwanese group called "Serenity Chan" (Anxiang Chan 安祥禪), which was founded by

the layperson Geng Yun 耕雲 (1924–2000). According to its website, Geng Yun's approach to practice is especially suited to modern society and enables serenity to be achieved in life through the practice of Chan.[7] The other group Jinghui mentioned, the Modern Chan Society, was founded by Li Yuansong in 1989. In the final year of Li's life, Modern Chan shifted its orientation to focus on Pure Land teachings, and Li himself became a disciple of the monk Huijing 慧淨 (1950–) (Ji Zhe 2008: 61).

Yet prior to this, the Modern Chan Society embodied many of the trends that continue to dominate contemporary Taiwanese Buddhism. It rejected any institutional distinction between lay Buddhists and the clergy and maintained that the Dharma should be considered in light of modern, rational and scientific knowledge. Importantly, it held that lay Buddhists should practice meditation, which in turn can lead to awakening within one's lifetime (see Ji Zhe 2005: 4–5). Indeed, Modern Chan's emphasis on the laity, on science, and on democracy exemplified the belief promoted by Buddhists in the present day that practice can complement and enrich modern life.

Similarly, Jinghui's Life Chan, arising after these earlier movements, shares an emphasis on demonstrating the usefulness of Chan to laypeople – something he considered important for "Buddhism's adaptation to modern society" (Jinghui 2001). This includes putting theoretical knowledge of the Buddha's teachings into practice; practicing mindfulness in the course of daily life; accepting that Buddhism can be practiced outside of the monastery; propagating the Dharma (following the example of Christians and Chinese Buddhists elsewhere – including Taiwan); and accepting that one is related to other beings (and thus part of society). By upholding right views and intentions, and practicing mindfulness, one can attain purity within the world (Jinghui 2001). Thus, like Shengyan, Jinghui teaches that the correct practice of Chan is in daily life, with the recognition that one cannot renounce ties to other beings. Shengyan and Jinghui have thus removed "agricultural Chan" from the farm and placed it in the office and home.

CONCLUSION

To be sure, during the early twentieth century monastics such as Xuyun 虛雲 (1840–1959), Hongyi 弘一 (1880–1942), and Yinguang 印光 (1861–1940) articulated Buddhist practice in more traditional terms. But today, and despite the fact that they exist in different political circumstances, key monastics and laypeople on both sides of the Straits also commonly present Buddhist praxis as entailing individual benefits and having social import. Chan thus is not merely about attaining individual liberation, as its critics charge, but should aim at bettering the self and society. The Pure Land is a place where various social goals are realized – a state of perfection toward which we can strive on earth (Jones 2003: 139).

Elitist Confucians, May Fourth modernizers, Christians, Communists, and Nationalists all shared a belief in the importance of society and modernity. For them, Buddhist practice – *nianfo*, sitting meditation, and rituals – is contrary to these values. Their critiques led reformers such as Taixu to re-envisage the application and meaning of Buddhist cultivation in terms that were aligned with these values. Indeed, it led to Buddhists embracing what Goossaert and Palmer (2011: 73–74) call the "Christian normative model," which can be seen in the outward forms of prominent Buddhist organizations in Taiwan today. Since the 1990s, China has also seen the growth of Buddhist philanthropy, thereby helping "the central government to perform its mission of poverty alleviation in impoverished regions" (Laliberté 2011: 119). Jiqun himself regarded this Christian philanthropic spirit as

representing the true face of Buddhism.[8] Although the above critiques have been recent, the Buddhist response has allowed for a resolution of tensions surrounding Buddhism's place in China since soon after its introduction.

What lasting impact will these worldly methods of cultivation have? In the 1990s, Buddhism was "rehabilitated" in China – although monasteries must be self-supporting, they can do this through tourism and donations (Ji Zhe 2004; on contemporary sources of income, see Birnbaum 2003: 442–444). Meanwhile, in Taiwan, the legal pressures that Buddhists faced in the mainland Republican era are gone. Yet the notion of an engaged Buddhism remains, suggesting that earlier reforms have changed expectations about the practices in which Buddhists should engage, among both laypeople and monastics; and even sitting meditation may be considered to have an importance that extends beyond oneself.

On a subsequent trip to Taiwan in 1999, Jiqun remarked that there were both advantages and disadvantages to what he had seen there. The central issue facing the clergy, he felt, would be their adherence to the monastic code (Vinaya) while continuing on their trajectory of worldly engagement. He warned that:

> the relationship between the other-worldly and the worldly is very important. If we are excessively inclined toward propagating the Dharma externally, we will neglect a monastic's internal cultivation. If we excessively emphasize internal cultivation, then we will of course neglect the external propagation of the Dharma. This is one aspect of the problem. The other is that if our level of worldliness is too deep, it will be difficult to avoid being rolled about and smothered in the red dust of the profane. Then there will be no difference from the laity. If one's world-transcending mind is too intense, one will enter the mountains to practice and not want to do anything. Therefore, whether we correctly manage this problem or not is directly related to whether Buddhism can develop in a healthy way in the future.

> (Jiqun 1999)

While he did not mention any specific establishments by name, Jiqun's warning indicates that while the tension surrounding Buddhism in China may have dissipated somewhat, there is a tension *within* Buddhism – between the push to embrace modernity and social goals and the retention of a traditional monastic lifestyle and individual practice. These unresolved questions will surely generate debate and new interpretations of classic texts and doctrines in coming years, as the story of Buddhism in China continues to unfold.

NOTES

1   This is the guiding ideology of the KMT, devised by Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙 (1866–1925). The three principles are democracy, nationalism, and livelihood.

2   See Xingyun's 星雲 entry in the *Foguang da zidian* 佛光大字典, which is available online: http://etext.fgs.org.tw/etext6/search-1.htm.

3   Much like Yongming Yanshou (904–75), who has progressively been considered the architect of dual Chan–Pure Land practice. Even though this conception is anachronistic, it presently has great force (see Welter 2010).

4   The English translation for each of the five components has been taken from: http://www.dharmadrum.org/fivefold/fivefold.aspx (accessed April 14, 2010).

5   See http://www.zgfxy.cn/article/showarticle.asp?articleId=59 (accessed March 27, 2012).

6   See www.nanputuo.com/nptxy/view.asp?Mid=153&Nid=9541 (accessed March 31, 2012).

7   See http://www.anhsiangchan.org/tutor6.html.

8   Notably, Taixu's reform efforts were also influenced by his observations of Christianity (Taixu 2005 [1938]: 335–36); Xingyun too stated that it was in response to Christianity that Buddhists began their social work (Xingyun 2006). Zhengyan keeps a picture of Mother Theresa in her room and is an admirer of Catholic philanthropy (He 1998: 311), having been inspired by it early in her career.

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BUDDHIST ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGINARIES

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Susan M. Darlington

Holding burning incense sticks in his hands, Buddhist monk Bun Saluth chanted a ritual normally held for Cambodians seeking good luck. But this time the subject blessed by his holy water was not a person. It was a three-meter python he bought from a farmer who was about to sell it as food.

"Go, go, and be safe," the monk said as he watched the snake slither to freedom in a protected forest area in Oddar Meanchey province in northwestern Cambodia.

(Anon 2010b: n.p.)

INTRODUCTION

Releasing animals from captivity is a common practice throughout most of the Buddhist world. Their liberation brings merit for a better rebirth to the practitioners through relieving the suffering of the animals. The practice emphasizes the ultimate Buddhist goal of escaping *saṃsāra*, the cyclical world of birth, suffering, death, and rebirth. In the case of Bun Saluth releasing the snake, however, the act underscores the tensions in modern Buddhism between the "other-worldly" aspects of Buddhist philosophy and the urgency of working to relieve suffering in the current world.

Many Buddhists, including many members of the Sangha, are moving into the realm of environmental activism based on their interpretations of Buddhist teachings. Bun Saluth is working with other monks to preserve an 18,261-hectare forest area in his province. What has become known as the Monks' Community Forest is part of a larger program in Cambodia to protect forests as carbon offset areas, earning the nation funds to help farmers find alternatives to deforestation for their livelihoods (Brady 2011; Brady and Rukavorn 2011).

With the urgency of environmental issues in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, many religious practitioners are looking towards their teachings and practices to find ways to respond. The example of Bun Saluth goes far beyond the blessing of the snake. For his larger program to protect the forest, he received the prestigious Equator Initiative Award from the United Nations Development Program for conserving biodiversity in 2010 (Anon. 2010b). The monk is concerned about biodiversity as well as the livelihoods of the people who depend on the forest and are more directly impacted by its destruction. He is motivated by his interpretations of Buddhism and its call to relieve suffering in the immediate world rather than strictly working towards escape from *saṃsāra*.

Within Buddhism, a question arises as to the appropriateness of addressing environmental issues through the religion. The environmental crisis is a new problem, one that the Buddha did not face or foresee. As Buddhists worldwide wrestle with how to respond, scholars and philosophers critically examine these processes. Debates arise over interpretation, tradition, and innovation, and between scripture and practice versus activism. Much of the scholarship on Buddhism and environment takes static approaches: Some idealize the relationship based on the assumption that environmental concepts and attitudes are inherent in Buddhist philosophy (e.g., Loori 2007; Macy 1990). On the other end of a continuum, scholars such as Blum (2009), Harris (1991; 1995), and Pedersen (1995), among others, criticize "eco-Buddhism" for being inauthentic or anachronistic, seeing no real connections to the original teachings. Both Ian Harris (1995) and Donald Swearer (2006) created typologies that stretched across these approaches, illustrative of the diverse approaches to and understanding of Buddhism's intersections with concepts of the environment. Even so, both of these lists stop short of critically examining the issues on the ground among Buddhists directly faced with the negative impacts of environmental degradation. Drawing from Schmithausen (1991), Swearer states a key, yet usually unasked, question underlying much of the scholarly debate surrounding Buddhism and environment:

> The specific question of what constitutes an "authentic" Buddhist ecological ethic invites the more basic question of what constitutes "authentic" Buddhism. As in all historic religions, Buddhism has evolved and changed over time and place. Today if the Buddhist tradition "is to remain a living tradition, it has to supply answers to new vital questions and … accommodate its heritage to a new situation by means of explication, re-interpretation, re-organization or even creative extension or change. One of these questions is doubtless whether or not an ecological ethics is required."
>
> (Schmithausen 1991: 6)
> (Swearer 2006: 136–137)

Looking at Buddhism as a lived religion, one can see the tension between the historic Buddhism that emphasized attaining *nibbāna* (nirvana) as the ultimate goal and the range of practices for relieving suffering in the modern world. Many Buddhists hold onto the historic practices and teachings, finding comfort in the knowledge of the possibility of leaving *saṃsāra*. Others, such as Bun Saluth, sense an urgency to relieve the suffering in the here and now. They believe that sentient beings cannot work towards nibbāna if they are suffering in the present. They will be more concerned with surviving the problems of drought, flooding, temperature changes, deforestation, and lack of food than with meditating or achieving awakening.

This tension is not resolved by Bun Saluth or other Buddhist environmentalists. The perspective of attaining awakening lives side by side with the efforts of some Buddhists to deal with contemporary problems such as environmental degradation and climate change. Malcolm David Eckel (2010) provides a framework for approaching Buddhist environmentalism. In an essay on how to bring together the seemingly contradictory terms "Buddhism" and "environmentalism," Eckel discusses

> the challenge we face when we want to give a critical and thoughtful account of Buddhism and the environment. From the unreflective point of view, the point is obvious: of course Buddhism respects the environment. When the tradition is scrutinized and the

key terms are given careful examination, the answer is not so clear. There are Buddhist values that lead just as easily in another direction. In fact, there are Buddhist values that put concepts like "nature" and "conservation" in doubt. But the original problem remains: What to do about the environment, and what to do about the environment from a Buddhist point of view? The answer … is to become enchanted once again by the symbols and "let the symbols give rise to thought." The challenge is to appropriate the symbolic resources of the tradition while acknowledging that this appropriation has no inevitability. It is simply an act of imaginative reconstruction, as if one were shaping a new landscape out of the mixed and contradictory residue of Buddhist tradition.

<div align="right">(Eckel 2010: 167)</div>

Increasingly across the Buddhist world people are responding to the urgency of the environmental crisis through engaging this "imaginative reconstruction" of Buddhist symbols and ideas. Not only are they making the religion relevant for the modern world, they aim to motivate Buddhists to take responsibility for environmental issues. Despite the many universal aspects of the environmental crisis, such as climate change, pollution levels, and rising sea levels, most Buddhist activists approach the environment through local problems. They invest religious rituals and symbols with environmental meaning in order to garner the commitment of local people to protect natural resources. Through rituals, trainings, protests, and teachings, they enact a form of what Richard Peet and Michael Watts (1996) call an "environmental imaginary," encompassing the way people are affected by and respond to the specific geographical, environmental contexts within which they live as they work to bring about social justice. Contemporary environmental problems are the result of political decisions and social lifestyle choices, what Escobar (1996) labels "power-knowledge" in the hands of a socio-political elite. Through responding to these same environmental problems in creative and new ways – appropriating symbolic resources to build new knowledge and deal with new problems – Buddhist environmentalists demonstrate a potential to deal with these problems. They identify their root causes by calling on Buddhist explanations of all suffering: greed, anger, and ignorance.

The forms these "environmental imaginaries" take vary across the Buddhist world. In Bhutan, Buddhist concepts have merged with the king's implementation of "Gross National Happiness" as a national ideal. This includes caring for the natural environment as home to sentient beings and something on which humans depend. Bhutanese and Tibetans both use the concept of natural sacred sites to promote conservation. These sites can range from specific forest groves, caves, lakes, rivers, or rock formations, to Mount Kailash, or the entire area encompassed by the current borders of Bhutan (Knapp 2012: 123). Similar connections between sacred sites and conservation can be found in Thailand. The protests against the construction of a cable car up the sacred mountain of Doi Suthep in Chiang Mai, as one example, emphasized collaboration between Buddhist monks, students, journalists, and conservationists, all concerned about the cable car's impact on both the forested areas of the mountain and the peaceful atmosphere of the Buddhist temple at its top.

In the United States, Buddhists protest nuclear development and the transport of nuclear waste because of the potential damage to the environment and the harm to sentient beings. In South Korea, the nun Jiyul Sunim walked across the country to argue before the government to save a sacred mountain from destruction by the construction of a bullet train tunnel. She framed her argument around the threat to an endangered beetle that lived on the mountain and the need to protect all sentient beings.

Among the Theravāda Buddhists of Southeast Asia one can find perhaps the most explicit examples of how Buddhist environmental imaginaries are not only constructed but acted upon. Bun Saluth works to protect undeveloped forest land in Cambodia through his reframing of rituals such as the release of the snake. The Lao Sangha implemented training for monks and novices on environmental concepts and activism (Darlington 2012: 241–44, Souphapone et al. 2005). The precedent for both the Cambodian and the Lao monks emerged in Thailand, where a small number of "environmental monks" (Thai: *phra nak anuraksa thamachat*) conduct rituals such as tree ordinations and long-life ceremonies for waterways (Darlington 1998, 2003b, 2012). They challenge the greed behind economic growth and try to address the problem of the ignorance of small farmers who get caught up in the government's push for agricultural intensification and cash-cropping. They draw from the farmers' own understanding of local environments to implement a new approach to interacting with that environment. They are addressing Eckel's (2010) question of what to do about the environment from a Buddhist point of view, providing a good case study for unpacking the emergence and implementation of Buddhist environmental imaginaries.

These monks demonstrate that this process is not inevitable, again following Eckel. What I find interesting about their work is not that they are solving Thailand's environmental problems. Unfortunately, the impact of their projects in terms of environmental success is limited. In their efforts, environmental monks use reinterpreted forms of Buddhism and definitions of the human/environmental relationship to make people think. They have been called crazy, forced to disrobe, been arrested, and even killed in one case. Yet their informal movement, symbolized by the tree ordination ritual, has captured the Thai imagination. From shocking the Thai public in the late 1980s, tree ordinations are now expected behavior and have entered Thai popular culture. In January 2010, for example, the contestants in the Miss Thailand Universe beauty pageant participated in a tree ordination ceremony, incorporating the ritual within an event that defines what it means to be Thai. Even the monks involved in what I call the Thai Buddhist environmental movement (Darlington 2012) have different methods and concepts of the environment's relationship with Buddhism. What this case shows us is the creativity of Buddhists and the flexibility of Buddhist teachings and practices in enabling Buddhists to address critical social problems such as the state of the environment.

This process is neither homogeneous nor inevitable. First, the number of monks actively involved in environmentalism is a small but visible percentage of the total Thai Sangha, a figure impossible to determine accurately because the category of "environmental monk" is not official. No records are kept on who falls into this group. Second, even among environmental monks, different imaginaries come into play, based on individual circumstances and interpretations of the role of a monk in society. Below I look closely at the stories of three environmental monks in order to illustrate how environmental imaginaries materialize and are used. The monks' use of ritual symbolism, particularly tree ordinations, demonstrates not only how they appropriated symbols to give them new meaning in light of social problems, but also how what I call a "Buddhist imaginary" emerged, as monks drew from both the specific environmental situations they faced and their interpretations of Buddhist values.

While specific to Thailand, the case of these monks illustrates the trend of increasing engagement in environmental issues among Buddhists worldwide. The environmental imaginaries enacted vary from place to place, situation to situation. In places such as Bhutan, South Korea, the United States, or Laos, their impacts remain limited. In Cambodia,

monks such as Bun Saluth are gaining national prestige and attention, but other problems occupy the minds of most Cambodians. Thailand offers a good example of the extent and diversity of how Buddhists create and use environmental imaginaries in their reinterpretation of religious teachings. It also demonstrates both the power and the danger of Buddhist environmental imaginaries – powerful enough to warrant appropriation by the state and popular culture, and dangerous enough to result in death. In 2005, the assassination of a monk revealed how threatened powerful people were by the activities of environmental Buddhists. Yet these activists continue to articulate their image of how Buddhism should be enacted in the world to deal with contemporary problems. The relationship between Buddhism and the environment goes far beyond questions of authenticity and appropriateness and needs to be examined within specific contexts and contestations to understand its potential. It is only a matter of time before more Buddhists across the world begin to follow suit through the creation of their own environmental imaginaries, challenging the concept of Buddhism as a religion solely focused on release from *saṃsāra*.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND BUDDHIST IMAGINARIES

Potts (2003) offers a good articulation of how the concept of environmental imaginaries can be used to understand both environmental problems and the contested views of the environment that often create them:

> The concept of the "environmental imaginary" permits an articulation of the ways in which localities, nature and the physical environment are both the results of, and sources for, social thought and action. Building on the work of Cornelius Castoriasdis's notion of the "social imaginary", Watts and Peet emphasize the connections of environmental imaginaries with visual images and with human creativity (267). Environmental imaginaries are not abstract patterns through which humans interact with their environment, but rather take concrete, creative narrative and visual forms. Further, these narratives and images do not merely constitute a field through which a society produces agreement and conformity; rather, they provide the "prime sites of contestations between normative visions." As a result, they provide ways both to understand interactions between nature and the social and to analyze the contested forms of those interactions.
>
> (Potts 2003: 30–31)

Using the concept of environmental imaginary, we can see how individual monks, and the movement as a whole in Thailand, have responded to environmental issues, especially through the use of tree ordination rituals and personal narratives. They are "reinventing nature," to quote Giovanna Di Chiro (1996: 310) from her discussion of the ways in which environmental justice activists in the United States "explicitly undertake a critique of modernist and colonial philosophies of unlimited progress, unchecked development, the privileging of Western scientific notions of objective truth and control of nature, and the hierarchical separation between nature and human culture." Thai environmental monks are doing much the same, using new concepts of nature and new interpretations of Buddhism to criticize the socio-economic direction of Thai society and to promote justice for rural people.

In the process, these monks adapt Buddhism itself in creative ways to deal with social justice issues, which I refer to as Buddhist imaginaries. Adapting Peet and Watts's (1996) concept for specifically Buddhist contexts demonstrates the dynamic nature of the relationship between Buddhism and the environment and the importance of examining this relationship within specific settings.

Based on almost thirty years of ethnographic fieldwork, I look at the interplay between how the environment has impacted the actions of a particular group of monks in Thailand and how their interpretations of Buddhism in turn affected their definitions of nature and the environment. Ultimately, this interplay results in specific actions in the world that engage power relations, have the potential to effect social as well as (or more than) environmental change, and can create a Buddhist environmental ethic.

Monks are not a marginalized or oppressed category – the category Peet and Watts (1996) emphasize in their concept of environmental imaginaries and Di Chiro (1996) underscores in her work on environmental justice. Quite the opposite: monks hold a central position in Thai society with the potential, should they choose to enact it, to effect significant change. Environmental monks, because of their positioning and close relations with rural people (who often are silenced, stereotyped, or generalized in Thai society), attempt to speak for local people. They aim to counter discourses of power that force farmers in particular into specific forms of agriculture not necessarily of their choosing, which result in debt and other forms of suffering.

It is this suffering that motivates these monks the most. They argue that since relieving suffering is the primary goal of Buddhism, they must act to end immediate and material suffering as well as metaphysical suffering. Luang Pu Phuttapoj Waraporn, a highly revered, high-status monk in Northern Thailand who undertook rural development work for over three decades, often stated that if people are hungry they will not engage in meditation or serious spiritual practices that could relieve suffering (*dukkha*) on a deeper level. How these monks work towards this goal – their stories and actions in dialog with each other and with others' concepts of environment, society, and Buddhism – articulates a vision of an interconnection with the environment that fosters social justice, ecological caring, and spiritual progress.

PERSONAL INTERSECTIONS

The story of one monk, Phrakhru Pitak Nanthakhun of Nan Province in Northern Thailand, sheds light on the ways in which environmental monks develop their concepts of nature and humans' relationship with it.[1] The story he frequently tells to explain his motivation for both becoming a monk and engaging in environmental actions illustrates well how an individual enacts an environmental imaginary. His is a story of childhood discovery that displays a conscious interconnection between Buddhism and nature. Yet the story is read backwards in time. Pitak frequently tells this tale at seminars for environmental monks and to anyone who asks why he became an environmentalist. The imaginary comes into play as we create histories for ourselves that support who we are and what we want to do. I am not saying that this story did not happen, but we need to keep in mind how perfectly it establishes Pitak's positioning vis-à-vis both Buddhism and environmentalism. As he began his environmental work in the 1980s, Pitak faced criticism from both the Sangha and people in power, businessmen in particular, regarding the appropriateness of his environmental work – not unlike the scholarly critiques of eco-Buddhism mentioned earlier. His story provides a response to this criticism, justifying his environmental actions in terms of Buddhist morality.

Pitak tells the story of hunting with his father when he was a child. His father made his living through hunting in the forest surrounding their village, and Pitak frequently joined him. On this particular day his father was hunting langur monkeys. He shot at a group of langurs high in the tree tops, hitting one that lagged behind. The animal fell to the forest floor and the boy raced to collect it. As he neared the body, Pitak noticed a baby langur clinging to the dead body of its mother. He pleaded with his father not to kill the baby, but to allow him to bring it home and raise it.

As his father spread the mother's skin out to dry behind their house, Pitak put the baby in a cage out front. For three days the baby langur refused to eat, crying constantly. The boy even got milk from his own mother, who was nursing his youngest sibling, to feed the langur, but it still would not eat. Concerned for its health and even whether it would live, he decided to release the baby back into the wild. As Pitak opened the cage, the baby langur raced around the house to cling to the splayed skin of its mother.

The incident led Pitak to realize the suffering inherent in life. More specifically, he observed the suffering that human actions caused to other beings and to nature, giving agency through the baby langur. As he tells the tale, Pitak points to this incident as the specific moment at which he both decided to become a monk and to actively care for the environment around him.

The story is a clear example of an environmental imaginary. The details rarely vary despite the multiple times Pitak tells it to different audiences. It represents clear values – both environmental and Buddhist – that justify his motivations for undertaking environmental activism. The story establishes his strong connections with his village and with the forest and justifies his speaking out on behalf of the rural villagers.

Through the story, Pitak creates not only an environmental narrative, but also a Buddhist one. He connects the human/environment relationship explicitly to a Buddhist concept of suffering. His telling of the story and the contexts within which it is told – usually seminars for other environmental monks or monks wanting to learn more about this movement – demonstrate both the agency of Buddhism itself and how he uses it to address social justice issues. In a form of dialectic, Pitak's (and other environmental monks') understanding of Buddhism informs his actions, which in turn influences the ways in which Buddhism is practiced in Thai society. Yet not all Buddhist environmental imaginaries are the same. A critical examination of the activism of two key environmental monks sheds light on the differences and tensions that can arise.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

Through looking at the particular actions and stories of individual environmental monks we can unpack different imaginaries at the intersection of Buddhism and the environment. These monks' narratives offer insight into the ways in which Buddhists define the environment and their positioning within it as Buddhists.

Two monks, both of whom I met briefly, provide a comparison: Phra Prajak Khuttajitto of Buriram Province in the northeast and Phrakhru Manas Nathiphitak of the northern province of Phayao. Phra Prajak was a wandering forest monk who came from a business background. He ordained later in life, in his forties, approaching Buddhism as a means of renewal through meditation. Jim Taylor (1991: 45) articulated the way in which Phra Prajak viewed the forest:

> The forests have long been seen by wandering forest monks as special places, not only in normative religious terms for spiritual practice, but as total ecological systems, important for all life forms. In this mutuality, no single life form should dominate another. Prajak saw the forest as important for all interdependent living beings in its regulation of the four basic elements of life (earth, air, water and fire). Prajak went on to say that, "nowadays we don't understand ourselves, where we are (spiritually) in relation to nature; but if we practice meditation we will understand ourselves and the relationship between forests and our body … even the Buddha and his disciples knew the importance of the harmony and interdependence between man and nature."
>
> (Taylor 1991: 98–99)

In contrast, Phrakhru Manas Nathiphitak is a village monk who ordained as a novice at a young age because he was "lazy." He told me that he did not want to do farm work for his father and saw becoming a monk as an easy alternative (personal communication, September 30, 2006). He became a typical village monk, performing rituals and offering spiritual guidance to the villagers. Despite his professed laziness, Phrakhru Manas was quickly promoted and became a highly respected monk in his region.

The forms of environmental engagement of each of these monks reflect their motivations, their backgrounds, and the ways in which they intersect with the society and people around them. All of these factors influence how they understand the interconnections between Buddhism and the environment. Both Manas and Prajak acted from their positions as monks, seeing their responsibility to relieve suffering. Yet they chose different responses to the tensions underlying environmental issues and those that arose due to their own involvement. Manas initiated a practice in tree ordinations that took on a life of its own and spread throughout Thai society. Prajak, acting from a genuine concern for Buddhist practice and human suffering, nevertheless sparked conflict and controversy.

Phrakhru Manas listened to the concerns villagers raised about logging concessions granted in their district in the early 1970s. These concessions included the rights to cut in watershed areas. The villagers equated the drought that occurred in the years immediately following the logging with deforestation. They approached Phrakhru Manas for advice and asked if there was some way he could help them.

He decided to use ritual to criticize the logging and to teach villagers alternative livelihoods that would minimize their impacts on the forest and relieve their debt. Manas saw the commercial logging as an example of rapid capitalist economic development based primarily on material accumulation and greed. This process paralleled the government's push for farmers to grow cash crops, a process that often left them in debt to the agricultural companies that sold them seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. He sought a way of strengthening Buddhism's place in the villagers' lives, believing that Buddhist values would reduce their suffering. The forest was the villagers' home. It was the site of necessary resources and the source of a means to relieve suffering if used properly. Manas encouraged villagers to gather renewable resources like mushrooms and bamboo, arguing that the less they cut the forest the more water they would have. At the request of villagers, he initiated rituals such as long-life ceremonies (Thai: *suep chata*) for waterways in the early 1970s and performed the first tree ordination in 1988, seeing these rituals as a way of both challenging corporate greed and teaching villagers responsibility and alternative livelihoods.

The images of Buddhism and the forest for Manas prioritize human responsibility. He focuses on people's duties and behavior as central to caring for the world as a whole rather

than simply conserving nature. He works with villagers to enact Buddhist values to counter the root causes of suffering: desire/greed, anger/hatred, and delusion/ignorance. To do this he first performed a long-life ceremony for a dried-up stream. This ritual brought the community together through focusing on the condition of the stream. It became a model for surrounding communities, providing a means of highlighting the underlying economic causes of environmental destruction and suffering and reinforcing basic Buddhist values in the process.

Phra Prajak's way into environmental activism differed from that of Manas. For Prajak, the forest was a meditation tool. In many ways, he epitomized the image of a forest monk, removing himself from society to practice in the "wilderness" (Kamala 1997; Taylor 1993a). His choice of a meditation site was Dong Yai National Forest. National Forest Reserve Land (NFRL) is often where forest monks go because of the limited forested areas remaining in Thailand. Yet settling in meditation sites in these areas is technically illegal. These areas highlight a conflict between the centrality of Buddhist values in society and the government's desire to control natural resources and the Sangha for its own agenda.

While living and meditating in Dong Yai, Prajak uncovered illegal logging allegedly being done by the military. This occurred after the national logging ban of 1989. Prajak's initial actions to challenge this logging were intended to protect the forest in its own right and preserve it as a meditation site. As a forest monk, Prajak valued the forest as a peaceful location conducive to meditation. Yet exposing and challenging the logging done in Dong Yai led Prajak into conflict with both the government and businessmen. He began to realize the larger impact of economic development and capitalist growth not only on the natural environment but on people as well. Gaining national attention, Prajak was arrested twice in 1991, once for establishing an illegal meditation center in Dong Yai National Forest Reserve, and the second time for allegedly hitting a police officer while leading a protest against villager relocation in a neighboring province (on his cases, see Reynolds 1994; Taylor 1993b, 1996).

These arrests marked visible change in Prajak's approach to the environment. Beyond seeing the forest primarily as a resource for meditation and spiritual development, he shifted to seeing it as essential for rural people's lives. As with other environmental monks, Prajak recognized the centrality of integrating Buddhist values and care for the natural environment. Unlike most of the other environmental monks, his actions brought him into direct conflict with the government and corporate power.

Prajak's arrests can be seen as efforts by the state to manipulate Buddhist and environmental imaginaries. The Thai state defines the environment, especially the forest, as a resource for the nation. In the process, the state built upon an image of Buddhism as part of the three-fold identity of the nation: Religion, Nation, and the King (Reynolds 1977). Through protecting and controlling forest resources such as Dong Yai and alleging that the actions of monks like Phra Prajak are inappropriate for members of the Sangha, the state attempted to gain control of the Buddhist environmental imaginary for its own agenda. As the government had done in the early twentieth century in using wandering forest monks as a tool to integrate peripheral areas of Siam under Bangkok's rule (Kamala 1997; Taylor 1993a), the state used its opposition to monks such as Phra Prajak to define the role of monks in relation to developing natural resources. In the process the state attempted to gain the moral high ground against activist monks who criticized its process of economic development.

Phra Prajak was arrested as a monk, despite the fact that monks' cases should be handled by the ecclesiastical system. The secular legal system technically has no authority over the Sangha (Reynolds 1994). Yet the fact the state arrested Prajak in robes indicates that it

contested the meaning of Buddhism itself as well as his specific role in such a political and economic issue. This conflict highlighted the degree to which Prajak's efforts touched a chord and threatened both the state and capitalist development. His vision of the relationship between Buddhism and the environment clashed with that of the state.

Through 1991, Prajak expanded his focus to incorporate people within his outspoken criticism of the government's "Green Isan" program, officially called the Land Allotment Program for the Poor Living in Degraded Forest Reserves (known by the Thai acronym *Ko Cho Ko*). This program was intended to remove people from "degraded" forest land so that the forest could be rejuvenated. The problem was that the forest was often rejuvenated through commercial plantations growing such plants as eucalyptus. In many cases, people were relocated to more degraded land, or to places where others already lived and farmed, leading to conflict among rural people (Lohmann 1991, 1993). Concern about the negative impact of this program, one which he saw as based on greed, led to Prajak's second arrest. He had been asked by villagers in the province of Khorat to help them in their protests against relocation through Ko Cho Ko. He joined a large group of villagers to lead a protest march in the provincial capital. The march was met by police who intended to prevent them from reaching the city center.

There are different versions of what happened next, all probably based on their own kind of imaginary. Prajak was confronted by a police officer amid the confusion of the conflict. In one version, his hand inadvertently encountered the police officer's face. In another, Prajak deliberately struck the police officer. Both accounts support conflicting imaginaries of the monks' role in society: In the first, Prajak was enacting his responsibility as a meditation monk for protecting the forest and preventing suffering. In the second, Prajak was clearly acting beyond the boundaries appropriate for monks through his engagement in a political conflict. Combined with his previous arrest, his second one challenged the intersection of Buddhist and environmental imaginaries.

IMAGINARY EVOLUTIONS

To fully understand these two monks' stories we need to step back and compare their backgrounds. Phrakhru Manas was himself a villager. He ordained young and maintained a close relationship with the forest as a resource for villagers. Phra Prajak came from an urban business background. He ordained late in life with the specific purpose of renewal and meditation. He approached the forest as refuge or escape.

Manas only became active after witnessing villagers' suffering and being invited by them to help. The villagers initiated the actions, asking first for the long-life ceremony for the dried-up stream to be conducted. Motivated by their suffering that he and they believed was due to government policy and the greed of corporate loggers, Manas acted well before the rise of the popular environmental movement in Thailand (which emerged on a large scale in the late 1980s; see Hirsch 1996). His actions were neither confrontational nor national in scope (although eventually he was pulled into the national eye), but focused on a local situation.

Unlike Manas, Prajak initiated his own actions. He focused on the forest as needing to be rescued first, later incorporating a social justice aspect to his work. Prajak was both confrontational and national in his actions as he explicitly targeted the state as promoting the cause of the deforestation. Jim Taylor (1993b; 1996) points out the local aspects of Prajak's actions as well as his national critiques.

These two cases allow us to see how both Buddhist and environmental imaginaries emerge and are used to promote social justice, but in very different ways. Prajak called the forest home; Manas actually lived within it for his whole life. He had no need to articulate as explicit an image of the forest as Prajak did; instead he worked for the larger community of which the forest was a central part. Manas emphasized the people living in and near the forest first, the forest itself second. Prajak reversed this approach: he began with the recognition of the value of the forest for his Buddhist practice, only later coming to a realization of the greater human suffering caused by deforestation.

For both monks Buddhism became a tool as well as a practice. Manas aimed to keep Buddhism relevant for villagers, acting as their leader because of his mutual dependence on them. In this way he enacted the classic model of a village monk. Prajak was a meditation monk, less concerned with reaching out to the larger society to maintain Buddhism. As a wandering forest monk, Prajak looked more towards the forest for his support than towards the laity.

Both acted from their positions through their understandings of the environment (i.e., the forest). Their imaginaries differ because of the contexts within which they grew up, practiced Buddhism, and ultimately encountered instances of social injustice. This led to separate ways of acting upon these imaginaries, resulting in distinct legacies. Phra Prajak was and still is famous for his arrests and confrontations. Because of his legal cases he left the Sangha in the mid-1990s and faded from society's eye. Well after his cases were closed Prajak quietly reordained in 2007. Unlike Prajak, Manas's ideas – especially the practice of tree ordinations – were picked up by other monks and the media. (Ironically, even Prajak took on this practice after learning about it as early as 1989.) Yet Manas still focused locally, emphasizing his own district within Phayao Province. Perhaps because of his quiet, local focus, Manas ultimately held greater national influence on the direction and actions of Buddhist environmentalism for a couple of decades. He won a national environmental award in 2000 and was the subject of several national television shows documenting his environmental activism.

Through comparison of Phrakhru Manas and Phra Prajak we can see how their individual imaginaries, Buddhist and environmental, overlap due to shared goals of social and environmental justice and diverge through different experiences and methods. Both were environmental monks, both reinterpreted Buddhism and Buddhist rituals to promote change in the ways in which Thai people think about and interact with the natural environment surrounding them. Both monks were critical of the consumerist focus of Thai economic development and were concerned about the loss of moral values that accompanies this process. Yet these two monks differed in the ways in which they thought about and acted on environmental issues. Manas worked quietly and locally, drawing on the stereotypical image of a village monk to bring about change. Prajak was charismatic and outgoing, often using his controversial image in the early 1990s to challenge both the Sangha and the Thai people to think about the ways in which they used (or ignored) Buddhist values in their treatment of the natural environment. But Prajak's fame ultimately became his downfall, and he faded from public view. Simultaneously, Manas unwittingly became famous because of the apparent success of his environmental projects and their impact on local people. He became the model for other environmental monks even while Prajak initially captured the public imagination. One of them invoked controversy and threatened the success of the environmental monks, while the other quietly invented a ritual that through public performance and enacting Buddhist values introduced a new and eventually popular environmental imaginary to Thai society.

In particular, the creation and evolution of the tree ordination ritual illustrate the intersection of environmental and Buddhist imaginaries and the process through which the environmental monks have influenced Thai society. Here we can see how Buddhism is fluid and flexible enough in how it is interpreted and practiced to allow for the creative responses to environmental and social problems through narratives and rituals.

RITUAL CREATIVITY

Tree ordinations, which celebrate the mutual dependence between the forest and humans, most directly symbolize the creative thinking and actions in which some Thai monks engage with respect to the environment. Through the creation of a new ritual practice, drawing on already established rituals in Thai Buddhism (most notably Buddha image consecration ceremonies), environmental monks challenged what they considered the immoral direction of economic development in the nation. Framing a concern about the forest, and the environment more generally, in Buddhist terms, the monks took on multiple issues: environment destruction and deforestation, most obviously, but also the rising debt and suffering of farmers, rapid economic development, and the decreased centrality of Buddhism in Thai life (Darlington 2003a, 2012).

Responding to changing environmental conditions, in 1988 Phrakhru Manas Nathiphitak was the first monk to perform a tree ordination. He did not intend to ordain a tree; he brought villagers together to sanctify the forest surrounding their community in order to highlight the damage caused by a series of logging concessions the government granted in his district of Phayao Province. People donated saplings to be given out to villagers to reforest the denuded areas, emphasizing the necessity of caring for the forest. Already concerned about increasing drought in the region, Manas and the villagers sought more powerful ways to bring attention to the negative impacts of logging on both human and nonhuman life. The monk adapted the text of a Buddha image consecration ritual to bless one of the largest remaining trees, around the base of which the villagers had placed numerous saplings. After the ceremony, the villagers regarded the tree, the surrounding forest, and the saplings as sacred. Lacking a term for the now sacred plants, the villagers began referring to the saplings as "trees that were ordained" (Thai: *ton mai thi buat lao*). Thus the term "tree ordination" was coined – not by the monk, but by the villagers on whose behalf he acted.

This ritual fits well with the concept of environmental imaginary, especially in giving nature agency. This agency shocked not only Thai society – thus gaining the attention that Manas and his followers hoped for – but it continues to shock Buddhist scholars who struggle to make sense of it in Buddhist terms. Mark Blum questioned the implications of anyone believing the trees are actually ordained:

> [M]y concern is with what the idea of ordaining trees or "performing long-life ceremonies" for rivers means both to us in the West and to Buddhism as a religion. At the very least these actions imply agency in the receiving body, which in a Buddhist context is defined as karmic accountability … However symbolic tree-ordination may be in Thailand, the disconnect between what may be nothing more than political theater and the religious importance of the ordination of monks (for whom this means abiding by 227 precepts) for maintaining Buddhism itself is jolting and worth further scrutiny.
>
> (Blum 2009: 209)

While agency is implied in the ritual, certainly the monks do not view it this way. For them, the ritual is a tool, used to teach the Dhamma and to challenge participants and observers to recognize the deeper lessons about how humans treat the environment. They do not use the texts of a *bhikkhu* (monk) ordination, but adapt various sources, such as the thirty-eight Mangala Sutta, the Seven Tamnan, and the Twelve Tamnan. These texts are commonly used in consecration ceremonies and to teach life lessons. Phrakhru Pitak Nanthakhun told me he selects the texts carefully depending on the community involved and the issues they face (personal communication, October 27, 2010). Among the teachings of the thirty-eight Mangala Sutta he usually uses are instructions on associating with wise rather than bad people, listening well to wise and respected men, supporting one's parents and family, abstaining from sin – including strong drink – and upholding the Four Noble Truths (see Payutto 1985: 320–24; Wells 1975: 253–54). In the Dhamma talk given during the ritual, Pitak includes commentary on the three poisons in Buddhism – greed, hatred, and ignorance – tying them to what he considers the "wrong" kind of economic development. In this process, he and other monks shift the agency engaged in the ritual from the tree itself or nature more generally to Buddhism – using Buddhist teachings to implicitly critique Thai society and people with power who abuse both farmers and the forest.

At the same time, embedded in the tree ordination is a criticism of how Buddhism has been used to support the dominant economic system, one that emphasizes materialist accumulation and consumption at the expense of people's well-being. Most obvious was the direct linking of the Sangha with the government's economic and political goals beginning in the 1960s through three programs: Thammathut, which sent monks to missionize in politically sensitive and economically poor border provinces; Thammacharik, through which monks worked with the Department of Public Welfare among minority mountain peoples to convert them from animism and develop them (generally through building infrastructure, bringing them into the national economic system, and assimilating them into Thai culture); and community development programs sponsored by the two national Buddhist universities (Darlington 2003a; Somboon 1977: 40–41; Tambiah 1976: 434–71). Second, the environmental monks, social critics, and the media accused elements of the Sangha of using the religion to profit; for example, charging exorbitant amounts for funerals during the Asian financial crisis at the end of the 1990s or mismanaging temple funds. Prominent critics of the Sangha's relationship with economic affairs include Phra P. A. Payutto (2000) and Sulak Sivaraksa (2002). The strongest critics target the Sangha's condoning and even engaging in the nationalist violence in Southern Thailand against the Muslim population (Jerryson 2011).

Despite the criticism of the direction of Thai society embedded within tree ordination rituals, these rites have captured the Thai imagination and have been appropriated within popular culture. In 1996, an environmental nongovernmental organization picked up the ritual as a means of gaining national attention for the plight of poor villagers dependent on the forest – and thus, the NGO argued, the tool best suited for protecting it. The Northern Farmers' Network initiated a program to ordain 50 million trees in honor of the fiftieth year of the Thai king's reign (Brown 2006; Delcore 2004; Isager and Ivarsson 2002; Tannenbaum 2000). Nicola Tannenbaum notes how, in the process, tree ordinations "changed from protests led by environmentalist monks to acts that the King supports" (Tannenbaum 2000: 109). As tree ordinations became increasingly popular and as they were used across Thailand for a range of political as well as religious and environmental purposes, they ironically pulled the environmental monks into positions of implicitly supporting the same economic

and political structures they initially criticized. Environmental and Buddhist imaginaries were reconstructed to serve different aims, again reflecting the flexibility of the religion depending on the situation.

In January 2010, another event further demonstrated the range of imaginaries in the intersection of environmentalism and Buddhism. The participants in the Miss Thailand Universe beauty pageant joined in a tree ordination ceremony in Northeast Thailand (Anon. 2010a). Photographs of the beauty contestants holding orange robes around large trees appeared in newspapers and on the web. (A series of photographs of the event can be seen on the official website of the contest, Bangkok Broadcasting and T.V. Co., Ltd. 2011). The beauty contest reflects and defines the ideal Thai woman, including what it means to be "Thai." With its advertisements and sponsors, the pageant exists largely as a form of celebrating consumption as well as defining the ideal Thai woman on both a national and international stage (Callahan 1998). Incorporating what once was a shocking and controversial ritual within the events of the contest illustrates the extent to which tree ordinations have become part of the Thai imagination. The website documenting the ritual only refers to it as a merit-making ceremony, with no explicit comment on the state of the natural environment. As merit-making is the primary practice of Thai lay Buddhists, the use of a tree ordination ceremony for this purpose in the beauty contest marks the degree to which environmental monks have affected Thai Buddhist practice and imaginaries, albeit not necessarily in the ways they intended.

Environmental monks continue to challenge the problems of Thai society and the negative impacts of consumerism on both the environment and people. In spite of its appropriation and popularity, they perform the tree ordination and other forms of environmental activism (both rituals and projects) as a means of critiquing the ways in which people use Buddhism to support both a policy and the practice of consumption. Rather than prioritizing the agency of nature through the rite, the monks emphasize the suffering of humans as a result of these policies and practices. Nature is not forgotten nor ignored, but the agency created through the rituals lies with the humans whose voices are usually silenced. The monks draw on rituals to redefine the environment and shift the focus from commercialism to social justice.

THE DANGERS OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGINARY

Working for social justice is not easy. Not only do the environmental monks struggle against appropriation of their symbols and methods, but physically they face danger as well. A final example of a Buddhist environmental imaginary is more recent than either those of Phra Prajak or Phrakhru Manas. This case involves the killing of Phra Supoj Suvacano in Fang District, Chiang Mai Province in 2005, in another conflict over development, use of the forest and land, and interpretations of Buddhism and the role of monks – all forms of imaginaries. Phra Supoj was assassinated for opposing the expansion of tangerine plantations in Fang District. More specifically, he and another monk were attempting to protect the land surrounding their meditation center. Neighboring farmers had already lost much of their land, taken over or bought cheaply by businessmen in order to create tangerine plantations for cash cropping. Tangerines require extensive land and use of herbicides and pesticides that drain into nearby waterways. Local farmers are often forced to seek work elsewhere or take on low-paying jobs on the plantations. Even then plantation managers can usually find

cheaper labor by employing immigrants, often illegal, from Burma. From a Buddhist environmental perspective, tangerine plantations embody several of the evils against which they struggle: capitalist development; recategorizing natural forests as plantations; and the resulting suffering of local people.

Phra Supoj's case has yet to be resolved. It never gained the national attention that Phra Prajak had, perhaps because Supoj himself was not confrontational. As an engaged Buddhist, he worked quietly behind the scenes, editing the website of Sekhiyadhamma, an informal network for socially engaged monks. His murder may have been a case of mistaken identity. The other monk at the meditation center believes that he may have been the actual target, not Phra Supoj (personal communication, October 8, 2006). This second monk was more outspoken in his criticisms of businessmen, especially tangerine farmers, and the state. Yet the two monks worked in tandem at the meditation center and together supported the struggles of the local villagers.

The handling – or mishandling – of the case by the authorities reveals conflicting imaginaries of Buddhism and the environment, or more specifically the forest, similar to Phra Prajak's case between the state, businessmen (often referred to in Thai as *phu mi itthiphon*, or "influential people"), the Sangha hierarchy, and environmental monks. Examining the conflicting imaginaries provides insight into other key issues of conflict, especially differences between the ways the monks and the state view the forest, Buddhism and the role of monks.

Imaginaries surrounding the forest are based on how its value is perceived. For the state and businessmen, the forest is a resource. It is the focus of development and money, as seen with the state's definition of plantations as "forest." The Royal Forest Department, for example, includes cultivated forests and plantations when determining the percentage of forested land remaining in the nation (Santita 1996). Environmental NGOs, on the other hand, usually insist on a definition that includes only primary forest. This results in debates over how much forest remains in Thailand. Environmental monks tend to agree with the environmental NGOs. Plantations such as tracts of tangerines and eucalyptus trees are not natural in their view, and they incur environmental damage and ultimately result in the suffering of the people who live near the plantations. Monks see the natural forest as a serene, peaceful place conducive to meditation and well-being. The plantations, on the other hand, are harsh and dry, in the case of eucalyptus, or overly controlled and manicured, in the case of tangerine orchards. In both situations local people have often lost land and jobs, and the environment has been damaged. For tangerines this involves significant amounts of pesticides and herbicides; the leaves of eucalyptus trees, which are not indigenous to Thailand, add toxins to the soil as they decompose, making it difficult for native plants to grow (Lohmann 1991).

The conflicting imaginaries surrounding the forest are based on scales of value and need. Tensions arise as local concerns are pitted against national and commercial needs and agendas. On a small scale, environmental monks aim to help villagers to develop livelihoods that are based on Buddhist values, feeding themselves first and only selling any surplus, for example. The monks discourage consumerism and material accumulation. They point to the forest as a resource for local people's needs, one that provides building materials, medicine, and food. If the forest is well cared for there is no reason to grow cash crops and buy food.

On a national scale, the state perceives the forest as a resource to be exploited for the national good. Although this view began as British foresters came in from Burma in the late 1800s, it solidified in the mid-twentieth century under the rule of Field Marshal Sarit

Thanarat (1908–1963), who took office through a coup in 1958. Sarit promoted rapid economic development through agricultural intensification, industrialization, and the development of an export market. Not only were large amounts of forest cut down to make way for agricultural fields, but the government encouraged rural people to plant cash crops rather than practice subsistence agriculture. This shift toward a cash economy based on the market fostered what the monks criticize as the drive of greed – exactly the kind of thinking they believe led to Supoj's killing. For these monks, even the sanctity of life and of Buddhism has fallen prey to greed.

Incorporating Buddhism in these issues raises additional conflicts and tensions. On one level, one would think that Buddhism would promote unity, encompassing a common set of values for all the people who see themselves as Buddhist. Yet the religion has become a tool in nation-building, a symbol of the nation supporting economic growth and progress. Sarit's economic development plan included linking Buddhism to the state and the nation's economic progress. He created the programs mentioned earlier, Thammacharik and Thammathut, that pulled members of the Sangha into working for the nation's agenda.

The environmental monks do not completely dissociate Buddhism from the nation, but see its primary purpose as being a support for the people. These monks regard themselves as enacting Buddhism's primary purpose, working to end suffering on both conventional and spiritual planes, not building Thailand's economy.

Phra Supoj's murder highlighted the conflicting images of both the forest and Buddhism in Thai society. His meditation center blocked the expansion of the tangerine plantations in the region, bringing Buddhism into sharp contrast with economic development. The presence of the two monks there actively backing local farmers' efforts to preserve their land and the surrounding forest stood in opposition to the image of Buddhism and the Sangha as supporting the goal of nation-building defined through economic measures. Here we are no longer talking about an abstract debate over whether using Buddhism to promote environmentalism is appropriate. Supoj's death makes it impossible not to recognize the deeply political nature of how one defines the environment and the role of Buddhism in society. These issues are literally a matter of life and death.

Some may argue that had Supoj not been engaged in challenging the expansion of the tangerine plantations he would not have been killed. Perhaps Supoj himself would be alive, but without his presence the plantation owners would have taken over the land, eventually leading to the end of a way of life, pushing local people into situations of much greater suffering. His assassination was one in a series of eighteen other unexplained deaths of environmental and human rights activists between 2001 and 2005 (Haberkorn 2005). This "coincidence" makes it difficult to ignore the stakes underlying control of the environment. Add to this the murder of a monk and debates surrounding the role of Buddhism are brought into sharper relief.

According to the state, the Sangha should uphold the image of the nation. Monks are the symbol of Buddhism, the people responsible for upholding its values and serving as models for the rest of the nation. Many members of the Sangha, on the other hand, and much of the laity focus on religious issues as distinct from social ones. Monks' primary responsibility is neither to build the nation nor to engage in social justice issues. They should be meditating, performing rituals, and serving as fields of merit for the laity. Environmental monks do not make this distinction. Suffering, they argue, is not solely a religious issue. They recognize the interdependence of spiritual and social/economic issues and work to relieve the suffering across all of these, even if this process brings them into conflict with the state's and

sometimes society's image of the Sangha. Phra Supoj's death did not lead to a decline in the number of monks participating in environmental projects or challenging the direction of the state. They simply became more circumspect and cautious in their actions, well aware of the possible consequences. At the same time, because of his death, many of the monks realized the urgency of opposing the growth of consumerism and materialism across the nation. That, they believe, is the best way to show support for the nation and to act according to Buddhist values.

CONCLUSIONS

While a list of Buddhist environment activities, such as the blessing of the snake in Cambodia with which I opened the chapter, builds the case for the abstract connections between Buddhism and the environment, it is far more critical and provocative to examine why these Buddhists act as they do, emphasizing the Buddhist aspects of their environmental work. People around the world are concerned with the state of the earth and the urgency of the crisis we all face. There exists a myriad of reasons to act, not the least of which is fear of the imminent demise of the world as we know it, possibly beyond its carrying capacity for life (at least human life). So why ground one's actions in a reinterpretation of Buddhism as the primary motivation?

The Thai environmental monks offer insight into this question, providing a base from which to examine environmental approaches in other Buddhist societies. Their stories reveal the intersection of history, politics, economics, society, and, of course, religion that influences the choices made by individual monks. Their environmental actions reveal some of the patterns and diversity of responses of the Sangha within a shared tradition. Collectively, their responses provide an opportunity to observe how the religion is rethought and reworked to deal with challenging issues and problems of a specific place and time and, ultimately, how these responses can lead to change in religious thinking and practice. At the same time, the collective serves as a check on the degree of change as both the Sangha and the society challenge monks who stretch their interpretations and practices too far. Here is a Sangha at work, as it is the community that creatively determines what is acceptable. The intersection with society is key. If at least a significant portion of society does not accept the new practices and interpretations, then it is unlikely they will continue. In Thailand, we can see how the intersection between Buddhism and environmental issues is evolving into an acceptable activity – indeed responsibility – of contemporary Buddhists, despite the scholarly debates and criticisms mentioned above.

Grounding actions in Buddhist interpretations helps develop an environmental ethic within the religion. Swearer summarizes the process of environmental and Buddhist imaginaries well, considering Buddhist actions within specific place-based contexts:

> [R]eligious-cultural narratives of place can make a crucial contribution to environmental ethics. Indeed, when it comes to inspiring concrete action to counter environmental degradation, such stories may play a more decisive role than an appeal to philosophical principles with ecological import, for stories and traditions of cultural practice have the power to touch the deepest sensibilities of personal and social identity. Ongoing narratives that connect myth and history, past and present, humans and nature, give an environmental ethic a personal, social, and cultural grounding that it otherwise lacks.
>
> (Swearer 2006: 136)

Through the different narratives of individual monks, we can understand why the idea of environmental monks or the performance of tree ordinations is not readily accepted by Buddhist scholars. Even as Thai society accepted environmental monks and appropriated tree ordination rituals, no single pattern of inevitability emerges. These monks engage in creative interpretation and appropriation of Buddhist symbols, as Eckel (2010: 167) described, as they each, in their own ways and in dialog with each other, attempt to be true to their understandings of their responsibilities as monks.

Is it appropriate for monks to engage in environmental issues? Are they wrong to interpret Buddhist teachings in ways that promote care for the forest and water? Or to perform rituals such as tree ordinations or long-life ceremonies for rivers that, according to Blum (2009), give agency to nature? These Buddhist environmental imaginaries, as much as they stretch what may be considered "authentic" Buddhism (Swearer 2006: 136), ultimately enable people to respond to changing and challenging circumstances. While we should not lose sight of Buddhism's ultimate soteriological goal, the examples of Thailand's environmental monks and their creative use of Buddhist ideas, rituals, and symbols to deal with environmental issues and the underlying socio-economic inequalities that create them illustrate how relevant and useful Buddhism still is in the contemporary world.

NOTE

1   *Phrakhru* and *Phra* are ecclesiastical titles for monks. As Thais formally go by their first names, I often refer to monks by their title and first name, or simply their first name.

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RENOUNCING THE WORLD, RENOUNCING THE FAMILY

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Geoff Childs

INTRODUCTION

Anthropologist Sienna Craig (2009) identifies a certain paradox in Tibetan culture. On the one hand, the birth of a child is notable for being "the gift of being reborn as a human being and the possibility for spiritual achievement this might engender." In the Buddhist worldview, humans are the only sentient beings capable of attaining awakening. The birth of a child is therefore cause for celebration. On the other hand, births are viewed with apprehension by Tibetans because they represent "painful, embodied reminders of the Buddhist First Noble Truth, the truth of suffering." Therein lies the paradox: birth creates the potential for awakening but also perpetuates an unrelenting cycle of suffering (Craig 2009).

For Buddhists, religious practice is an act of altruism epitomized by the bodhisattva's vow to seek awakening not for individual gain, but for the benefit of all beings. Śākyamuni Buddha, who began life as the wealthy and pampered Prince Siddhārtha, diagnosed the root causes of human suffering and prescribed an antidote consisting of rigorous intellectual, moral, and physical discipline. To embark upon the quest for awakening, he abandoned his parents, wife, and newborn child. Since adopting Buddhism in the seventh century, many Tibetans have been inspired by the Buddha's story and tried to emulate his life course by renouncing material wealth and social connections in order to seek solitude in mountain retreats. Their spiritual exploits often contain a subtext involving the intense suffering of family members who are left behind. The decisions people make that necessitate sacrificing supporting one's family in order to pursue spiritual aspirations are the topic of this essay.

DON'T SQUANDER YOUR HUMAN BIRTH!

According to Buddhist teachings, being born human is a precious opportunity because only humans are capable of attaining awakening. However, death is inevitable and can occur unpredictably at any moment. Thus, one must not disregard or delay religious practice and thereby squander the rare prospect of attaining awakening.

Tubten Gyatso (Thub bstan rgya mtsho, 1876–1933), Tibet's 13th Dalai Lama, emphasized the precious nature of human birth in a sermon to an audience of clerics and laypeople. He argued:

> Consider also how rare is the human life form in comparison to the immeasurably large number of animals, insects and so forth. At the moment we have all the opportunities of human existence at our disposal, but if we ignore them for transient, worldly pursuits, there is not much hope that after our death we will regain an auspicious rebirth. Those who die bereft of spiritual training have little hope of happiness in the hereafter.
>
> (Mullin 1998b: 53)

Regarding the inevitability of death, Kelsang Gyatso (bsKal bzang rgya mtsho, 1708–57), Tibet's 7th Dalai Lama, wrote,

> From our very birth, life pauses not for a moment
> But races onward toward the great Lord of Death,
> Life is a walk down a wide road leading to death,
> A melancholy scene, a criminal being led to his execution.
>
> (Mullin 1998b: 55)

In Meditations on the Ways of Impermanence, Kelsang Gyatso reiterated the point by stating:

> Buddha attained the glorious immortal vajra body,
> Yet he still enacted a death scene.
> This body of flesh, blood and bone, covered in skin,
> Like a bubble of water is bound to perish.
>
> From its very birth a child sees his parents slowly age,
> Sees them each day come closer to the grave.
> How can you say to me, "But I am still young"?
> I warn you, there is no hope of hiding from death.
>
> (Mullin 1998c: 212)

Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa bLo bzang grags pa, 1357–1419) cautions in his *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path to Awakening* that most people think their time for death is far away, and so feel little compulsion to practice religion (Lopez 1997). Lama Gungtang Konchok Denbe Dronme (Gung thang dKon mchog bstan pa'i sgron me, 1762–1823) reiterates the importance of commencing serious religious practice early rather than late in life in his widely read treatise *Conversation with an Old Man*, which presents a lengthy exchange between an elderly man and a haughty youth. Recounting his former physical prowess, the old man proclaims,

> There was no sport I did not play
> And no pleasure I did not know.
> I gave not a single thought to death
> Or the advent of old age.

The noise of the friends
And relatives who surrounded me
Constantly held my attention
And turned my face from everything else.
But the stealthy suffering of age
Slowly pressed in upon me.
At first I did not notice it,
And when I did it was too late.

After lamenting his subsequent physical and mental decay, the old man tries to convince his counterpart that a similar fate awaits. When the young man cites social and financial obligations he must attend to before practicing religion full time, the old man counters,

Your attitude is empty of reason.
Previously I also lived with the thought
To engage in practice soon.
Work is like a man's beard:
No matter how much you cut it,
The cutting never ends;
The beard just grows out stronger.
For me, years passed like this
But the work never reached an end.
Procrastination is merely self-deception.
If your idea is to procrastinate forever
You will have no hope of spiritual accomplishment
And our conversation has been in vain.
You should just return to your home
And leave this old man to meditate in peace.

As the young man begins to waver, the old man explains,

It is not easy to cultivate an experience
Of the truth taught by the enlightened ones
And even more difficult to do so in old age.
Youth is the time to learn and
To become familiar with the teachings.
Then as one grows old with the passing years,
It is easy to dwell within practice.

The narrative ends with the humbled youth and the wise old man going off to meditate together in a secluded retreat (Mullin 1998a: 89–100). Tubten Gyatso also warns against procrastinating the commencement of religious practice until it is too late. He argues:

If at that time [the instant of death] one sees that due to attachment to friends, relatives, property and one's body one has wasted one's life and only generated a great deal of negative karma, the mind will be overwhelmed by regret, like a man who suddenly realizes that he has eaten a lethal dose of poison and it is too late to apply the antidote.

One should firmly determine that from now on even at the cost of one's life one will not fall under the misguiding influence of the eight worldly concerns,[1] such as pleasure and pain, fame and notoriety, etc. Resolve to avoid worldly interests just as you would avoid stepping in excrement (Mullin 1998b: 58). He then called his disciples to action by quoting another lama:

Abandon thoughts of home and possessions,
And resolve to practice the spiritual path.
Otherwise, distracted by gregarious activities,
One becomes the fool who renders
One's own precious human opportunity meaningless.
(Mullin 1998b: 61)

To summarize, Tibetans consider human birth as a rare and precious opportunity to achieve awakening. Unfortunately, people often squander their chance by becoming completely immersed in worldly affairs and procrastinating religious practice until it is too late. That is why many Buddhist masters, like Tubten Gyatso, are adamant that the only way to achieve awakening is to abandon one's family and friends and seek solitude.

RENOUNCING FAMILY, FRIENDS, AND MATERIAL POSSESSIONS

Yogis who roam the Tibetan highlands in search of secluded places to meditate are often the most forthright proponents of the notion that one must reject all trappings of domestic life in order to achieve awakening. In the following verse, Milarepa (Mi la ras pa, 1052–1135), one of Tibet's most beloved yogis, expounds upon the basic Buddhist lesson that attachment to impermanent phenomena – like friends and material possessions – is a root cause of sadness and suffering.

Looking back on the land of my birth,
Impermanent place like a city of spirits,
It appeared a city, but was nothing – thus I was sad;
But on considering it my mind became happy.
Don't consider homeland permanent, fortunate ones.

Looking back on the friends I've had,
Impermanent circle like the inn at a market
Where travelers gather at night and leave at morning,
They appeared an unbroken circle, but scattered – thus I was sad.
Don't consider friends permanent, fortunate ones.

Looking back on the possessions I gathered
Impermanent wealth like a honeybee's honey,
Gathered by me, but enjoyed by others – thus I was sad.
Don't consider wealth permanent, fortunate ones.
(Rinpoche and Cutillo 1995: 113)

In another song Milarepa cleverly substitutes the attributes of worldly life with the superior attributes of spiritual life associated with his remote retreats:

> I left behind my father's fine house,
> And while practicing in mountain caves
> I'd no need for repairs or patches in roofs.
> This fine stone mansion of meditation
> Was built by myself, a beggar.
> Wonderful – this blissful state of affairs!
>
> Leaving behind my father's rich field
> I tamed the rough earth of my own mind.
> This cultivation and pliability of mind,
> This thorough perfection of love and compassion
> Was accomplished by myself, a beggar.
> Wonderful – this blissful state of affairs!
>
> Lovers are trouble so I never married,
> But attended the consort of clear light.
> This union of method and wisdom,
> This companionship of the natural state,
> Was achieved by myself, a beggar.
> Wonderful – this blissful state of affairs!
>
> Away from troubles and confusion
> I reared the infant of void awareness.
> This resplendence of clear-light dharma-body
> In unconditioned freedom from preconception
> Was raised by myself, a beggar.
> Wonderful – this blissful state of affairs!
>
> I've never gathered worldly wealth
> But relied on the wealth of satisfaction.
> These seven superior treasures
> Free from worries and vexation
> Were acquired by myself, a beggar.
> Wonderful – this blissful state of affairs!
>
> I myself have achieved such joy;
> If you think it's blissful, you should do likewise.
> And there you have my song of yoga.
>   (Rinpoche and Cutillo 1995: 40–41)

Elsewhere Milarepa substitutes drinking from a mountain brook (which he likens to a "stream of awakening") for beer and tea; mountain caves for fine houses; "the friendship of wisdom" allows him to "abandon the problems of an ever-troublesome mate"; nourishing "the infant of clear light" removes him from "the quarrels of inimical children who in return

for loving care are the main trouble of their parents' old age" (Rinpoche and Cutillo 1995: 51–52). Clearly, he considered domestic life to be an impediment to religious practice. Godrakpa Sonam Gyaltsen (1170–1249) uses similar allegories to express the bliss he attained by abandoning secular life.

No home to uphold; just roaming aimlessly through the land.
Now the yogi who has discovered the mind as a permanent home is so happy.

No constructed castle; just the castle of experiencing mental stability.
The yogi who has turned back the militant hordes of distraction is so happy.

No accumulated wealth; just contentment that dawns from within.
Now the yogi who enjoys an inexhaustible treasure is so happy.

No friendly companion; just the companion of primordial mind.
The yogi who never parts from the true nature is so happy.

No son in this short life; just the infant of intrinsic awareness.
The yogi who upholds the hereditary line of the Victors is so happy.

No supplicated deity; just the master and the Three Jewels.
The yogi who never parts from devotion is so happy.

(Stearns 2000: 145)

Commenting further on the distractions family life poses to the dedicated ascetic, Godrakpa Sonam Gyaltsen proclaims,

Renouncing mundane activities and forsaking the secular life,
this meditator living alone without companion is so delightful.
No need for snotty, diarrhetic children is so wonderful.

(Stearns 2000: 91)

In summary, the most intimate procreative act between a man and a woman brings forth an individual who, by virtue of being human, is capable of attaining awakening. If that person follows the life course of a layman, he is complicit in perpetuating a never-ending cycle of suffering. If, on the other hand, he manages to chart a life course devoted to religion, he can potentially mitigate the suffering of all sentient beings by attaining awakening. Therefore, from a philosophical standpoint Tibetan parents have an incentive to release their children from the tribulations of worldly existence. But that does not always happen due to a cultural paradox: Tibetans are devout Buddhists who also care deeply about perpetuating family lineages and tending to the economic well-being of their households.

SUPPORT THE FAMILY OR SUPPORT RELIGION?
A FAMILY MANAGEMENT DILEMMA

Every Tibetan begins life embedded in a network of family relationships that is hierarchically structured according to attributes such as age, birth order, gender, and aptitude. Anthropologist

Melvyn Goldstein (1971) coined the term "Tibetan corporate family" to highlight an ideology that individuals are expected to subordinate their personal ambitions to the collective good of the household. No custom is more emblematic of this principle than fraternal polyandry whereby two or more brothers share a wife. The pragmatic advantages of polyandry are twofold: it concentrates male labor so that members of a household can simultaneously engage in a range of economic pursuits (farming, herding, and trading), and it ensures that the household's key economic assets (agricultural land, domesticated animals, and material possessions) are passed along intact from one generation to the next.

In most Tibetan families the head of household position is bequeathed to the eldest son.[2] He is responsible not only for managing the household's assets, but also for delegating responsibilities to all family members. Due to his immense responsibilities, any hint that the designated successor to the head of household position may abandon worldly life is bound to encounter resistance. For example, Chökyab Pelzang (Chos skyabs dpal bzang, 1476–1565) of Dolpo was an eldest son and heir apparent to his parents' property. From his biography we learn,

> After a while my parents and relatives argued that being the eldest son, I should remain in a worldly calling, but I remained firm in what I had already understood, namely that phenomenal life consists of suffering by its very nature, and so I did not listen to them at all.
>
> (Snellgrove 1967: 131)

The attempt to create equilibrium between householders' economic needs and the membership requirements of religious institutions is encapsulated by the Tibetan convention that the "middle of three male siblings" (*bupün barwa*) should become a monk. If a family has only one son, parents are unlikely to send him to a monastery or allow him to wander off to a mountain hermitage. Without a son's support, parents risk descent into poverty. In a large family with a sufficient labor force, however, parents have the opportunity to gain merit for supporting religion by donating a son to the monastery (a cultural rationale) while also shifting to the institution the responsibility for providing room and board to a non-essential household member (an economic rationale). In some cases a successful monk-son can even help support family members through various means, for example by giving donations he receives for performing rituals. The more elder brothers a boy has, the more redundant he is to the agro-pastoral activities of the household and the more likely parents will permit (or actively encourage) him to devote his life to religion. Nevertheless, the presence of elder brothers is not a guaranteed gateway to monastic life because labor requirements vary from one household to another. Sonam Lodro (bSod nams blo gros, 1456–1521) of Dolpo was the youngest of four sons. As a dying wish his mother declared, "Since this boy has the makings of a good man of religion, see to it that at all costs he enters the religious life." Despite his mother's desire, Sonam Lodro recalls,

> Although I had a great urge towards the religious life, yet because we had great worldly possessions, my old father and my other relatives said that I must continue in the world. But still I did not listen to them.
>
> (Snellgrove 1967: 86)

Sonam Lodro defied the will of his father and kin in order to pursue a religious vocation. Many people, however, do not enter monastic life on their own volition. Tibetans generally express great reverence for high-ranking clerics who occupy the pinnacle of the social

hierarchy, and therefore may find it difficult to decline a cleric's request to send their child to a monastery. Tashi Khedrup (bKra shis mkhas grub) started life as the son of peasants beholden to Sera Monastery near Lhasa. After wounding his eye, Tashi Khedrup's mother took him to a monk-physician at Sera. He recalls:

> When my eye was better and mother was thinking about taking me home, she went to make an offering to the Lama and get his blessing for us both. He asked her to leave me with him so that I might become a monk, and be one of his personal attendants when I grew up. It would have been difficult for her to refuse. She was very devout, and was pleased that a son of hers should be chosen by an important Lama to become a monk. But my father was not so pleased! He had only one other son at home, and did not get much help from him because he worked as a shepherd for the monastery estates. Father had hoped I would grow up to be useful to him on the farm and with his animals. But there it was. I became a monk – a very little one.
>
> (Khedrup 1998: 7)

In other cases parents are legally compelled to send a child to a religious institution. For example, peasants who farmed certain monastic lands in Tibet were obliged to supply the Dalai Lama's ceremonial dance troupe with young, lithe males. Tashi Tsering (bKra shis tshe ring), who was selected for such duty in 1939, recalls:

> In our village everyone hated this tax, as it literally meant losing a son, probably forever. Parents, therefore, often told lies about the ages of their children to avoid their being candidates. I don't know if my parents tried such deceptions, but if they did it did not work, for one day my father received an order from the district governor to send me for the preliminary examination. This order threw my family into chaos and changed my life completely.
>
> My mother cried, sobbing loudly, when she heard the news. In fact, I recall clearly that the whole family was angry and fearful. The possibility that the son they thought would take over the family farm might be lost was awful to contemplate.
>
> (Goldstein, Siebenschuh, and Tsering 1997: 11)

The cases presented above illustrate tensions in Tibetan society between the demands of domestic life and the requirements of religious institutions or the spiritual aspirations of individuals. When many children are born into a household, the family has some flexibility and can afford to part with one or more members. In contrast, parents with few offspring are, understandably, reluctant to relinquish any of them. Ideally, the quest for awakening should trump any rationale for chasing worldly objectives. However, the stories that follow testify that choosing a life course that is aimed at benefiting all sentient beings does not necessarily offer solace to those who are left economically and socially vulnerable by the departure of a key family member. Spiritual endeavors have social consequences.

SHABKAR ABANDONS HIS MOTHER[3]

Shabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol (Zhabs dkar Tshogs drug rang grol, 1781–1851) was born in Rekong, an area of Amdo on the eastern sector of the Tibetan Plateau. His autobiography is

one of the most popular written works in the Tibetan world. From a young age Shabkar displayed strong inclinations toward religion, and he recalls:

> From early childhood, I never told lies or spoke harshly, and I avoided any kind of cruel games or mischief. I preferred to recite prayers, sing the mantra *Om mani padme hum*, and beat a drum or play other temple instruments. In this way, I found entertainment through activities inspired by the Dharma.
>
> (Ricard 1994: 17)

Shabkar's unmarried mother had one son and two daughters. Illegitimacy is common throughout the Tibetan world, in part because Tibetans have a remarkably tolerant attitude toward children born out of wedlock. In Shabkar's case, he was the only male offspring in the family, so his mother had strong concerns for its well-being if he were to abandon village life. She therefore sought a bride for him. However, Shabkar had other plans. When a local lama asked him if he intended to marry, Shabkar responded:

> I have no desire to be reborn in samsara. Having seen the troubles that come with having a home, I have no desire to have a wife; my sole desire is to give up all the concerns of this life, as the spiritual masters advise, and to stay in the pleasant groves of a mountain retreat, drinking the nectar of the holy Dharma.
>
> (Ricard 1994: 27)

His lama then advised,

> Well, my son, if that's so, you're not wrong. Meat, liquor, sense pleasures, worldly enjoyments – the best things of samsara are temporarily beguiling. Young brides in the full bloom of youth and beauty are expert at leading one astray. Therefore, even if you have as your companion a young daughter of the gods, have no attachment, have no desire. Why? Speaking generally, because all the things of this world are without essence, impermanent, unreliable, and by their very nature lead to suffering. In particular, because domestic life is like a pit of fire, a cannibal island, a nest of poisonous snakes. Enjoying the entire array of samsaric perfections, wealth, and pleasures is like eating food mixed with poison, like licking honey on a razor blade, like the jewel on a snake's head: a single touch destroys.
>
> (Ricard 1994: 27)

Shabkar's mother and relatives countered:

> By all means you must take one [a wife], for who will take care of our land and house? If you don't, then what is the difference to me between having you and having no son at all? If you want to practice the Dharma, you can do so very well in your homeland. All your uncles practice the Dharma that way.
>
> (Ricard 1994: 28)

Rekong, Shabkar's homeland, is renowned as a stronghold of householder lamas. Although prohibited from farming and performing other mundane chores, household lamas are expected to marry and procreate their own religious lineages. Unlike mendicant yogis, they

can earn a decent living through the performance of rituals for fellow villagers and thus contribute to the economic well-being of their families. Shabkar's mother was thereby asking him to choose a lifestyle that would allow him to split time between religious practice and worldly commitments. When Shabkar asked his mother's permission to be released from worldly obligations, she pleaded:

> Son, we are now living in dark times; in this Rekong province, if I do not have a son living at home, I will be mistreated by everyone.
>
> You are my only son – I have no other. When I grow old I will be unable to care for myself. If you have compassion for your mother, take a wife and practice the Dharma at home. Thus, our well-being will increase.
>
> <div align="right">(Ricard 1994: 32)</div>

Despite his mother's pleas, Shabkar sought teachings from local lamas and spent more time away from home. As it became evident that he would not marry, his grandmother (whom he depicts as "a woman well-versed in worldly chatter") excoriated him:

> Ay! What a wicked thing you've done! It looks like your father Ngawang Tsewang's lineage is finished now! You don't deserve to be called a man! Later, when people see your poor old mother deprived of everything, you will have set an infamous example!

Shabkar responded:

> Dear loving grandmother, listen to me.
> Aren't the words you've said today mistaken?
> Having given up wickedness of all kinds,
> I have now gone forth toward excellence.
>
> Remaining in samsara, where there is no contentment –
> To desire and be attached to samsara:
> Now *that's* wicked!
>
> Falling into the prison that is one's homeland –
> Clinging to the father and mother and wife that bind one to samsara:
> Now *that's* wicked!
>
> Taking part in all sorts of nonvirtuous deeds
> Just to feed and clothe one's family:
> Now *that's* wicked!
>
> Human life is over in an instant.
> To leave for the next life without Dharma:
> Now *that's* wicked!
>
> Approaching one's next rebirth,
> The impulsive force of negative acts
> Hurls one down into the three lower realms:

Now *that's* wicked!

Having thrown down a layman's rags,
My body wears excellence, the beauty of saffron robes.

Having given up all useless talk,
My speech remains in excellence,
Making prayers and reciting mantras.

Having cast away all nonvirtuous thoughts,
My mind rests in excellence, conceiving pure thoughts.

I got away from a worldly home
As though from a pit of live coals
And inherited the cool pavilion of homelessness:
This is the excellence of my action.

Happy in this life, when going on to the next
I shall ascend, higher and higher:
This is the excellence of my career.

<div align="right">(Ricard 1994: 34)</div>

When Shabkar once again stated his intention to refrain from worldly activities and seek religious teachings, his mother pleaded:

Son, so dear to my heart, I have cared for you since you were small. Leaving your mother, where will you go? Even young animals never stray from their mothers. Son, how can you leave me? Son, you are the very eyes in my head. If you go far away, your mother will be like a blind woman. Son, you are my very own limbs. If you go far away, your mother will be like a cripple. Son, you are my very own heart. If you go far away, your mother will be like a corpse. Whatever you do, stay somewhere near, so I might see you or just hear of you.

<div align="right">(Ricard 1994: 40)</div>

Shabkar then lied by telling his mother he would settle nearby. Upon leaving, he lamented:

The birth and death of beings is so uncertain. Now I am about to leave my mother, having lied to her. Who knows if we will ever meet again? … Overwhelmed by sorrow, I walked away, looking back again and again, tears streaming down my cheeks.

<div align="right">(Ricard 1994: 42)</div>

Far off he did go – to Mongolia, in fact. His mother and sister must have been stunned when they learned he was nowhere in their vicinity. Seven years later a letter reached Shabkar in which his mother wrote:

I had hoped that we – mother and son – could stay together in our homeland until I die. I was pleased to think that in my hour of need, when ill, stricken by old age, and at the

time of death, I would have a son unlike others' sons. Now that I'm old, just to get up, sit down, or move at all is difficult. With only meager food and drink my health has worsened.

Your mother has no soft, warm clothes:
I'm dressed in ragged clothing.
Many years have passed since you have left me;
How can you bear to stay away like this?
…
I, your aged mother,
Have grown old; I'm close to death.
Son, if, out of compassion,
You don't pay me even one visit,
All your meditation on kindness and compassion toward all beings
Will have been for naught.

<div align="right">(Ricard 1994: 141)</div>

Shabkar wrote back:

Several years may pass when an only son
Is off performing exorcisms and village ceremonies in distant places,
Simply to earn enough to feed his family,
Yet the parents he leaves behind don't mind.
So why should you feel so unhappy, Mother,

That your son has been away all these years,
Staying in distant places,
In solitary mountain retreats,
To accomplish your lasting happiness and enlightenment?

There might be many children who benefit
Their parents in this life with food, clothes, and wealth.
Yet how many parents have children staying in the mountains,
Practicing the holy Dharma for the benefit of their parents' future lives?

There are difficult children, always opposed to their parents,
Who live nearby them all their lives, bringing their parents more harm than help.
And there are loving children who do bring benefit,
Even though they live far away –
Isn't this so? Think about it.

We shall meet again in this life;
Even if we don't, whatever practice I undertake
I shall dedicate it to you, Mother.
I pray that, later, we will meet again in the Joyful Pure Land
And stay there together, never parting.

<div align="right">(Ricard 1994: 142)</div>

One day Shabkar had a premonition that his mother would die, so he began a long journey home. However, before reaching his village, messengers arrived bearing news that she had died. Shabkar mourned:

Mother who first gave me life,
Mother who fed me and clothed me,
Mother who allowed me to enter into Dharma,
Mother who now teaches me impermanence:

Having died, you have turned into a handful of bones.
Your bones I have turned into *tsa-tsas*.[4]
These *tsa-tsas* I have hidden in a scree.
Now even I can no longer see them.

In times to come, when I am wandering in distant places,
I shall never see you again, Mother.
Not only will I never see you again, Mother,
I won't even see the *tsa-tsas* of your bones.

Considering this, sorrow surges up from deep within me.
Now I do not need to do "meditations on impermanence."
My old mother, leaving me, gave me these teachings.

With this in mind, I, her disconsolate son,
From now on will practice the holy Dharma.
(Ricard 1994: 203)

Shabkar vowed to intensify his religious practice by going on pilgrimage to distant places. He no longer felt compelled to remain in, or nearby, the home and family that caused him so much sorrow. Nevertheless, he continued to dream about the mother he loved so much, but whom he left behind when she pleaded for support.

THE FAMILY DRAMAS OF NUBRI'S LAMAS

Pema Döndrup (1668–1744)

Pema Döndrup (Padma don grub) was born in Nubri, an ethnically Tibetan valley that is now part of Nepal's Gorkha District. I have written about Pema Döndrup's life story elsewhere (Childs 2004): his struggles to practice religion as a youth, the barriers his parents imposed to his becoming a wandering yogi, and the hardships he caused them by refusing to return home after his brothers died, leaving his parents alone and destitute. The family's struggles culminated in a series of heart-wrenching scenes. While meditating in a mountain retreat, Pema Döndrup's father approached and pleaded with his son to come home and manage the household, saying:

I can no longer go up and down the hills. Fire, water, and wood are not readily available. I can no longer work. When we need food and clothing, there isn't any. Our lives are not over, yet our standard of living pales in comparison to that of others.

A despondent Pema Döndrup countered, "Oh, Father! Oh, Mother! How can you, who gave me this human form, tell me to turn my back on religion?" He then returned to his retreat and reasoned:

> The lama instilled within me the ability to meditate by setting his hand on the crown of my head, so how could I bring myself to place the strap of a basket there? How could I dare discard the religious garment that I wear to help overcome the lower realm of worldly existence in order to take a plow in hand? How could I dare cast aside the religious garment that covers the lower part of my body in order to fornicate? How could I dare uncross my legs that have been locked in the meditative sitting posture in order to scurry uphill and downhill for nothing? I have motivated myself to pursue a religious life.

From an outsider's perspective Pema Döndrup's words seem to epitomize an ungrateful son's rejection of parents who desperately needed him when rendered vulnerable by old age. But from a Tibetan Buddhist perspective, Pema Döndrup was on a quest to achieve a higher, more altruistic goal. By attaining awakening, he would be better positioned to alleviate the suffering of all sentient beings – including his parents. Pema Döndrup stayed the course by refusing to forsake his mountain retreat for life with family in a village populated by beings mired in worldly suffering.

Yönten Gyatso (1938–2012)

I first met Yönten Gyatso (Yon tan rgya mtsho) in 1995 while conducting research in Sama, the largest village in Nubri, Nepal. Yönten Gyatso is a gracious man possessing an infectious smile and generous demeanor. As a member of the prestigious Ngadag lineage of householder lamas (*ngagpa*), he was not only permitted but expected to marry in order to continue the family pedigree. We quickly became close friends, but over time it became apparent that he spent more days away from his village and family than at home.

Lama Jigme (bLa ma 'Jigs med), the young head lama of Sama, has a keen interest in local history and the life experiences of his elderly relatives. He is also married with children and therefore has an intimate understanding of what is required to harmonize religious obligations with family life. Therefore, one day in June 2010, the two of us sought an audience with Yönten Gyatso to learn how he balanced domestic affairs and spiritual activities.

We heard that Yönten Gyatso had just returned from a trip and was residing at his temple above the village, so we strolled up the hill and approached his residence. Our old friend beckoned us inside. We stooped through the low doorway and entered a smoky kitchen where his wife was preparing tea over an open fire. After reminiscing a bit and inquiring about each other's families, Yönten Gyatso invited us into the main chapel of his temple. He apologized profusely when we entered. Rain water had seeped through the porous roof and damaged sacred images painted on wooden panels, small mounds of sawdust beneath cabinets bore proof positive of insect infestations, beams sagged to the point of imminent collapse, and floorboards jutted out at every imaginable angle. The chapel, built by his grandfather over a century ago, was a painful reminder that every structure, no matter how precious, is destined by the laws of impermanence to deteriorate.

We sat down on locally woven carpets covering the low benches upon which practitioners sat while conducting rituals. Although Yönten Gyatso seemed eager to tell his life story, doing so clearly brought forth conflicting emotions judging by the number of times that he broke into tears. Here is Yönten Gyatso's story.

> Since I was a child, I had a desire to practice religion. I first got married at the age of fifteen. While staying with my brother at Dakar Taso Monastery,[5] Dakar Rinpoche [the head lama of Dakar Taso] asked me to come up and study at his place. I stayed there for one month. Around that time, his eldest daughter was given to me and my brother as a bride.
>
> After returning home for one month, we went back to her father's monastery. Soon there was trouble in the marriage because she wanted me to stay in her father's household as a *magpa*.[6] She said she feels lonely in Nubri and misses her family. I said there is no way I could stay there as a *magpa*. Drakar Rinpoche's elder brother is a monk, and Dakar Rinpoche had no sons, only three daughters. There were no male heirs to carry forward their great lineage. Drakar Rinpoche suggested that, since we are two brothers, one of us could stay with him as a *magpa*. But we insisted that there is no way either of us could stay back as a *magpa*. In the end, the marriage did not work out.
>
> Another marriage was arranged for me and my brother. I left the marriage after two years due to some disagreements; she and my brother stayed together. I then met my current wife who has a long story of personal suffering, but let's not discuss it. Whatever the past, we were very compatible and have been together since then. We have two sons and one daughter.
>
> When I was thirty-five I went to visit Chatral Rinpoche[7] who was living near Kathmandu. When I first heard the name Chatrel Rinpoche, I felt deep faith. Upon meeting him for the first time I could not control my emotions and cried tears of happiness. He did not have many disciples then, so I requested him to accept me as a disciple.
>
> Rinpoche asked questions about my life. He asked me if I have family. I replied that I have a wife and children. I said that I also desire to practice religion. Rinpoche was impressed with my effort when he learned that I have a wife and children. He said that my overcoming of family ties to practice religion is excellent, and said this is an example of severing attachments to worldly life. He then told me to come back in the ninth month [of the Tibetan calendar] when the meditation huts would be completed. He said one meditation hut would be set aside for me, and I felt so happy.
>
> I came back in the ninth month and received many teachings. Then Chatral Rinpoche sent me to Darjeeling [in India] to do a three-year and three-month meditation retreat. So, when my older son was only four months old, I left my family to go into retreat at Darjeeling under Chatral Rinpoche's instructions. However, my family did not have enough food and resources to support them. My mother was seventy-seven then. I left my mother and my own son to follow the words of my Rinpoche. This is the story of my life. I left my seventy-seven-year-old mother and four-month old son to practice religion. I never saw my mother again.
>
> After completing the retreat, there was a letter from home saying that my mother had passed away almost two years ago. I cried in front of Rinpoche. He advised me not to cry, and said it is okay since my mother had passed away while I was practicing religion. Rinpoche consoled me by saying that he himself was in retreat when his

mother passed away, so he also had not been near her. Rinpoche advised me to pray for my mother's departed life force, and consoled me further by saying that he heard my mother had been surrounded by loved ones when she passed away. But I was still crying because I could not control my emotions over the loss of my own mother.

I offered money to Rinpoche to pray for my mother's deceased soul. I also offered money to many eminent lamas so they could dedicate prayers on behalf of my deceased mother. I regretted not being present or of any help at the time she passed away, but I did my best by offering prayers for my departed mother. One lama suggested that it would benefit my mother's departed soul if I undertook a fasting ritual. Another determined through divination that if I commissioned a statue of a particular deity then my mother would have a good rebirth. I did everything as instructed by the high lamas.

Since then I have undertaken another three-year and three-month meditation retreat. Rinpoche admired my effort. He said that a person should always practice until the attainment of awakening; that one should not be complacent and take pride in saying he had completed three or six or nine years of retreats. One has to continue to practice until attainment of awakening, after which he must render service to all sentient beings.

These are some of my life experiences. As you can see, life is a mixture of joy and sorrow. I turned seventy-three this year. I don't have to worry about my family. My wife is doing fine, and all my children are fine with lives of their own. I do not desire to amass wealth or anything. But at this moment I have a strong desire to rebuild my temple. This is the main worry in my life now. I might face more ups and downs later on in life, but at the moment rebuilding the temple is my main preoccupation. I do not have any wealthy patrons, nor am I wealthy. This temple reconstruction project is the only worldly attachment in my life. I hope this temple will be completed soon, for who knows when I will die, tomorrow or any time. Once dead, that is the end. Everyone has to die one day. If I die now, the regret and attachment to the temple will remain. However, if the temple is completed, I will not have any regret or attachment remaining in this life.

In one sense I am unfortunate because I remain mired in this worldly life. However, in another sense I am very fortunate because I have received all these sacred teachings during my lifetime. I take pride that in this one human life I have been able to receive so many teachings and practice religion. My children are settled in their own lives, and all our property is divided amongst them. Once I have rebuilt the temple, I want to go to stay near my root lama. I want to go there to continue my religious practice. The least I could do is to recite prayers and be near my root lama since, one day, death is going to come. It is time now for my wife also to recite prayers and prepare for the next life since she has been attached to her children so far in this life. Worldly existence: you can neither leave it nor escape it. That is the story of my life. I do not have anything else to say.

In early 2012 workmen completed the reconstruction of Yönten Gyatso's temple, thereby freeing him to spend time with his root lama near Kathmandu. I only saw my dear friend once more. He arrived at Sama in November 2012 just as I was leaving. The encounter was brief and bittersweet, for we knew this was to be our final meeting; he was suffering from terminal cancer and passed away one month later. As a touching final gesture before departing this lifetime, Lama Yönten Gyatso had returned home to be with his wife and children.

NOTES

1   The eight worldly concerns, regarded as a great source of human anguish and discontentment, actually consist of four pairs of opposites: (1a) delight in having material possessions and (1b) disappointment in not having or losing material possessions; (2a) the joy of being praised by others and (2b) the dejection felt when disparaged by others; (3a) contentment stemming from having a good reputation and genealogy and (3b) the disconsolate feeling of having a bad reputation; (4a) the delights of experiencing pleasant sensations and (4b) the pain of experiencing unpleasant sensations.

2   Not all Tibetan households are headed by males. Female-headed households are often run by widows, single-mothers, and in some cases women who are more competent than their husbands.

3   The author would like to thank Snow Lion Publications and Matthieu Ricard for granting permission to reprint lengthy passages from the translation of Shabkar's biography.

4   Votive tablets made by mixing bones and ashes with clay.

5   Dakar Taso is a small monastery north of Kyirong in Tibet that was built on a site where Milarepa spent several years meditating. It became an important institution where many Buddhist masters living in the highlands of Nepal went for teachings.

6   Matrilocally resident groom: a common solution in households that lack a male heir.

7   One of the greatest masters of the Nyingmapa sect, Chatrel Rinpoche (b. 1913) is a venerated yogi who has dedicated his lifetime to meditation and other spiritual pursuits. He left Tibet and settled in Nepal in the 1960s.

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TOWARDS A BUDDHIST THEORY OF THE 'JUST WAR'

Damien Keown

INTRODUCTION

The last century proved to be one of the bloodiest in history, and the present one also began on a belligerent note. The terrible events of September 11, 2001 in New York brought home to the world the awesome damage that can be inflicted by well-trained and coordinated terrorists who act without concern for their own lives. In the aftermath of "9/11," Buddhist writer and activist Stephen Batchelor (2001) wrote: "The attacks in New York and Washington burst my complacent Buddhist bubble." In line with this new realism, attention has been drawn in recent years to an apparent disparity between what Buddhism preaches and what it practices with respect to issues such as terrorism, violence, and war. Recent historiography, such as Jerryson and Juergensmeyer (2010), suggests that Buddhists have regularly participated in wars, and have justified this by using arguments similar to those found in the Western "just war" tradition, although in a less systematic format. Such bellicose conduct seems in stark contrast to Buddhism's well-known pacifist scriptural teachings, and the apparent willingness of Buddhists to resort to armed force has surprised and disturbed many Western converts who, perhaps somewhat naively, assumed that what they read in scriptures like the *Doctrinal Verses* (*Dhammapada*) accurately described the historical and political reality of Buddhism in Asia. It seems that with respect to war there is a fault line in Buddhism and a contrast between precept and practice. The scriptures teach that killing is wrong, but nevertheless wars are fought and not uncommonly justified by religious reasons. Schmithausen (1999) describes this as a "compartmentalization of values" which in extreme cases is "almost schizoid." It seems there is a challenge for Buddhism either to consistently adopt pacifism, or to develop something along the lines of Western just war theory setting out in what circumstances it is justified to resort to war (*jus ad bellum*), and, if so, the principles that will guide combat once battle is joined (*jus in bello*).

In the aftermath of the attack on the World Trade Center, President Bush took the view that the battle had to be taken to the terrorists and that the safety of the world depended upon the capture and punishment of those responsible. Vowing that "justice will be done," he played a leading part in organizing a coalition of nations that sent troops first of all to Afghanistan to fight the Taliban regime that was thought to be harboring Osama bin Laden,

and also in launching operation "Iraqi Freedom" in March 2003. Subsequently, in December 2009, President Obama announced a surge in American troop numbers in Afghanistan as part of the NATO coalition. Ironically, this occurred shortly after he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in October of the same year, and in taking this action his approach contrasted with that of an earlier distinguished winner of the same prize. In his 1989 acceptance speech, the Dalai Lama cited Gandhi and spoke of nonviolence, love, and compassion. In his analysis, war is caused by ignorance and selfishness and can be eliminated through altruism, understanding, and a sense of brotherhood and universal responsibility. For him, the problems are essentially of a psychological nature rooted in the classic Buddhist triad of greed, hatred, and delusion. The cure is therefore self-cultivation.

For President Obama, on the other hand, this solution is unrealistic, and in his view there are times when the use of force is necessary and morally justified. I think we must assume, since both men were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, that the ultimate goal of both is peace and that the disagreement between them is not over the end but over the means to achieve it. If so, who is correct? Is President Obama's strategy of fighting fire with fire the right one; and if not, does the Dalai Lama's approach offer a better prospect of success? Subsequent incidents such as the NATO intervention in Libya in March 2011 and the killing of Osama Bin Laden in May of the same year have kept these questions firmly in the public eye and given Buddhists further food for thought.

CONTRADICTIONS IN BUDDHIST APPROACHES TO VIOLENCE

This chapter will explore the apparent contradiction between Buddhism's pacifist teachings and the frequent resort to the use of force by its followers in an attempt to understand why in *theory* Buddhists follow the Dalai Lama, but in *practice* often follow President Obama. In an effort to resolve this contradiction the final part of the chapter will outline a possible Buddhist theory of just war by drawing on the Western tradition of just war reflection. In essence, it will suggest that Buddhists who are not strict pacifists can adopt the traditional Western approach with little modification and in so doing advance beyond the sometimes unconvincing justifications for war offered by the limited Buddhist sources that conceive of war as falling within the realm of moral possibility.

I am not the first writer to explore the parallels between the Western just war tradition and Buddhist thinking around issues of war and peace.[1] An important contribution was made by Elizabeth Harris in two publications (2001; 2003),[2] but the most substantial work to date is a monograph on just-war ideology in Sri Lanka by the late Tessa Bartholomeusz (2002). I will focus on this work since it raises theoretical issues I wish to explore at some length. Here I offer a critique of the theoretical basis Bartholomeusz identifies as underpinning the Western approach to the concept of a just war that she applies to Buddhism. Her approach draws on W.D. Ross' concept of "prima facie duties" and owes an intellectual debt to Charles Hallisey, who first suggested Ross' work as a possible model for understanding Buddhist ethics. Hallisey believes Ross' approach is consistent with his own theory of "ethical particularism," or the view that no one theory can offer a comprehensive interpretation of Buddhist ethics. I first explain why I think Hallisey is mistaken in this view in order to make clear where, as I see it, Bartholomeusz goes astray in applying this line of thought to Buddhist justifications for war. The chapter accordingly has three sections. The first explores the Buddhist background to war; the second critiques the interpretation of

Buddhist just war ideology offered by Bartholomeusz; and the third proposes an alternative basis for a Buddhist theory of just war.

THE BUDDHIST BACKGROUND TO WAR

Traditional Teachings on Violence

Traditional Buddhist teachings strongly oppose the use of violence, analyzing it in psychological terms as the product of greed (*rāga*), hatred (*dveṣa*), and delusion (*moha*). The false belief in a self (*ātman*) and a desire to protect that self against "others" who are thought to threaten it is seen as one of the underlying cause of aggression. Buddhism holds that drawing a sharp boundary between self and others leads to the construction of a self-image that sees all that is not of "me and mine" (such as those of another country, race, or creed) as alien and threatening. When this strong sense of self is reduced by practicing Buddhist teachings, such egocentric preoccupations subside and are replaced by a greater appreciation of the kinship among beings. This dissipates the fear and hostility that engender conflict and so removes one of the main causes of violent disputes. When threatened, Buddhists are encouraged to practice patience (*kṣānti*), and there are many stories of exemplary patience as well as practices designed to cultivate toleration and forbearance. Anger is a negative emotion that only serves to inflame situations and inevitably rebounds, causing negative karmic consequences. When asked in the *Connected Discourses* (*Saṃyutta Nikāya*, i.47) what is the one thing whose killing he approves of, the Buddha replies that the noble ones praise (only) the killing of anger.

Early Buddhist literature contains numerous references to war, and the view expressed almost unanimously in the texts is that since war involves killing, and killing is a breach of the first precept, it is morally wrong to fight in either offensive or defensive wars. In marked contrast to the teachings of the Qur'an, the Buddha states (*Saṃyutta Nikāya* iv. 308–311) that warriors who die in battle go not to heaven but to a special hell, since at the moment of death their minds are intent on killing living beings. A legend in the commentary to the *Dhammapada* narrates how the Buddha's kinsmen, the Śākyas, offered only token resistance when attacked by king Viḍūḍabha and allowed themselves to be slaughtered rather than break the precept against taking life. The *Birth Stories* (*Jātaka*) contain stories concerning princes and kings who were so horrified by violence that they renounced their kingdoms to become ascetics or refused to defend themselves in the face of attack. Indeed, it is almost impossible to find sources in pre-Mahāyāna literature that justify or condone the use of violence. Some writers do detect a degree of ambiguity about war in the early sources and note that the Buddha stops short of condemning it forthrightly in his conversations with kings, but it is unclear how much this owes to diplomacy and concern for the survival of the monastic community (*saṃgha*) as opposed to representing his ethical views on the use of force.

As time went by, however, some Buddhist texts showed a willingness to countenance the use of force. An exception to the pacifist stance is an early Mahāyāna source known as the *True One Chapter* (*Satyakaparivarta*). Dating probably to the second century CE, this text uses Mahāyāna concepts such as compassion and skillful means to justify warfare, torture, and harsh punishments. In the words of Stephen Jenkins (2010), this source states that:

> Torture can be an expression of compassion. Capital punishment may be encouraged. … Celestial bodhisattvas … support campaigns of conquest to spread the influence of

Buddhism, and kings vested with the dharma commit mass violence against Jains and Hindus.

In the manner of the *Treatise on Material Gain* (*Arthaśāstra*), the text sets out a kind of proto-just war philosophy that argues that warfare can only be pursued when other means have failed and that kings should try first of all to befriend, then help, then intimidate, before resorting to war. Nevertheless, the idea that political violence can even be contemplated takes us a long way from the pacifist Buddha of the Pāli Canon who never explicitly condones the use of force.

War in Buddhist History

Turning from theory to practice, the pacifist ideal of the early canonical sources has not prevented Buddhists from fighting battles and conducting military campaigns from a mixture of political and religious motives. The historical background to the Buddhist involvement in war in different countries has been conveniently surveyed by Peter Harvey (2000) and documented further in recent scholarly studies such as the one by Jerryson and Juergensmeyer (2010) mentioned above. The early history of Sri Lanka was convulsed by war between Sinhalese and Tamils, and King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi (first century BCE) is regarded as a national hero for defeating the Tamil general Eḷāra who had invaded the island from South India. Duṭṭhagāmaṇi's victory was glorified in a famous work known as the *Great Chronicle* (*Mahāvaṃsa*, fifth–sixth century CE), which relates that his army was accompanied by Buddhist monks and that Buddhist relics adorned his spear, or standard. Monks disrobed and joined the army to fight in what the chronicle depicts as a holy war, a rather surprising concept to find in Buddhism.

In the modern period, Buddhist religious groups have had a close involvement with Japanese nationalism and militarism. The Zen and Pure Land denominations provided financial support for the 1937–45 war with China, and in the Second World War most Buddhist schools (with the notable exception of Sōka Gakkai) supported the Japanese war effort. In his book *Zen at War* (1997), Brian Victoria has exposed the extent to which many well-known Zen masters were enthusiastic advocates of war, to the surprise and embarrassment of many of their pacifist Western followers. A detailed study of the anti-Japanese war between Japan and China has been done by Xue Yu, who has also written about the participation of Chinese monks and nuns in the Korean War. One of these, the Venerable Xindao, made an address in 1951 in which he stated: "To wipe out the American imperialist demons, who are destroying world peace, is in accordance with Buddhist doctrines; it is not only blameless, but will actually give rise to merit as well" (Xue Yu 2005: 145). Examples of this kind could be found in virtually every region of Buddhist Asia, from China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Tibet, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. In fact, these are all regions included in the study by Jerryson and Juergensmeyer (2010), and publications such as this make it clear we are not talking about isolated cases of Buddhists fighting wars so much as the systematic and sustained involvement by Buddhists, both lay and monastic, in wars over many centuries. Writing in the introduction, Jerryson (2010:3) states: "The motivations for this volume are many, but chief among them is the goal of disrupting the social imaginary that holds Buddhist traditions to be exclusively pacifist and exotic." He goes on: "The chapters in this volume investigate this dark underbelly of Buddhisms, with particular attention to the monastic interplay with warfare" (2010: 4).

Buddhist Justifications for War

How do Buddhist sources attempt to justify the use of violence? The closest Buddhist texts come to offering a consistent justification for violence is by reference to compassion. As Jenkins (2010) notes, "The validation of compassionate violence … is found across Mahāyāna traditions and is common to its ethics, not an unusual exception to normative pacifism." Mahāyāna sources often claim, for example, that enemy soldiers may be killed out of compassion so they avoid harming themselves by incurring bad karma. However, the notion of compassionate violence is ethically problematic in several respects. First, there is a need to be cautious with respect to any claim that the rules of morality can be overridden for subjective reasons. This can easily turn into a justification for doing whatever one wishes simply because one claims to experience a certain kind of feeling. Even if the feeling is genuine, however, we still need an independent moral justification for any actions that flow from it. Second, the textual examples of compassionate killing usually concern advanced bodhisattvas, not ordinary mortals. Not only does this exclude the mass of humanity from relying on compassion as a justification, but it also leads to an elitist morality in which a tiny minority of individuals self-designate themselves as belonging to the class of the enlightened and act without conventional moral restraints. Third, it is not entirely clear whether these and other moral examples found in the texts are to be interpreted literally or metaphorically. Are Buddhists, for example, really expected to offer their bodies as food to hungry animals (as in the story of the hungry tigress in the *Garland of Birth Stories*; *Jātakamāla*) and give away their children (as in the tale of Prince Vessantara), or are stories narrating such deeds best seen as didactic and inspirational rather than normative? Fourth, many Mahāyāna texts that emphasize compassion also condemn killing unequivocally. For example, the *Sūtra on Upāsaka Precepts* quotes the Buddha as saying "Good son, the bodhisattva mahāsattva has compassion and does not kill for immeasurable lives; for this reason he obtains a long life" (Shih 1994). Indeed, there is something paradoxical about the claim that compassion can justify killing, since the great majority of sources state that it is out of compassion that one *refrains* from killing, and this is a reason commonly advanced for vegetarianism by Mahāyāna sources. Similarly, in the Pāli Canon the Buddha is often described as one who has "laid aside the stick and the sword and dwells compassionate and kind to living beings" (*Dhammapada* i.4). Fifth, we may wonder whether there are any limits to what can be done in the name of compassion. As Brian Victoria asks, is it really conceivable that the kind of mass slaughter associated with modern warfare could be an expression of wisdom and compassion (Jerryson and Juergensmeyer 2010: 126)? Can torture and genocide be justified expressions of compassion, or is it more likely than anyone capable of doing such things has in reality abandoned all moral standards and is simply deluding themselves as to their motives? As Coates (1997: 64) notes, "The mark of this ruthless humanitarianism is its lethal, but sadly all too frequent, combination of 'abstract' love with 'concrete' hate." Sixth, even if we take compassion seriously as a justification, it seems to be something of a red herring, since most wars are not motivated by compassion but by a state's concerns over its security or national sovereignty. Finally, the notion of compassionate killing falls well short of providing a comprehensive theory that explains either in what circumstances it is morally justified to go to war or how that war should be conducted. On a comparative note, it is interesting that one of the justifications offered for the Crusades by Christians against Muslims at the Council of Lyon in May 1274 was compassion. The argument was put that a genuine knight of Christ should welcome the opportunity to enter into battle because the war would be an act of charity directed towards nonbelievers. Questionable arguments justifying killing in war by compassion are therefore by no means unique to Buddhism.

BARTHOLOMEUSZ ON BUDDHIST JUST WAR IDEOLOGY

Apart from compassion, the other principal candidate for a Buddhist just war theory is the one suggested by Tessa Bartholomeusz in the course of a commendably thorough study of the war between Buddhists and Tamils in Sri Lanka (Bartholomeusz 2002). Bartholomeusz draws on references to war in Buddhist narratives and stories, such as the fifth-century *Great Chronicle*, and combines them with Charles Hallisey's reflections on "particularism" in Theravāda Buddhism and W.D. Ross' concept of prima facie duties to construct a Buddhist theory of just war or *dharma yuddhaya*. In essence this states we have prima facie duties such as *ahiṃsā* (nonviolence) that can be overridden in certain extreme circumstances, such as the need to defend the Dharma. The *dharma yuddhaya* theory is an advance on the notion of compassionate killing since it gives us one clear *jus ad bellum* criterion, namely defense of the Dharma. However, it does not explain *why* it is thought justifiable to kill in order to protect the Dharma (particularly since its decline and disappearance are thought to be inevitable), nor does it give much guidance on the circumstances in which the prima facie duty of nonviolence can be overridden.

Ethical Particularism

In order to explain the contradictory evidence about war in Buddhist sources, Bartholomeusz draws on a theory first suggested by Charles Hallisey. Hallisey believes that a variety of moral theories can be identified in Theravāda Buddhism and suggests that scholars who have sought to explain Buddhist ethics by reference to a single comprehensive theory have been asking the wrong question. He believes that the question "Is there a moral theory in Theravāda Buddhism" has "distorted our perception of Theravādin ethics" because "its practitioners and intellectuals have resorted to more than one kind of moral theory." The search for a single unifying theory is misconceived, Hallisey (1996: 37) believes, because "we realize that there can be no answer to a question that asks us to discover which family of ethical theory underlies Buddhist ethics in general, simply because Buddhists availed themselves of and argued over a variety of moral theories."

Siri Sanga Bo

The main textual evidence Hallisey offers in support of particularism is the story of Siri Sanga Bo (or Sri Sangbo), a medieval king of Sri Lanka. Siri Sanga Bo was a bodhisattva who initially refused an invitation to become king because he recognized that the kingly duties of upholding the law and punishing the guilty often involve actions that produce bad karma. After being persuaded by monks that this was not inevitable and that on the contrary a wise and virtuous king can earn much merit, he agreed to take the throne. Hallisey (1996: 36) correctly identifies the arguments of the monks as "some variant of a virtue-ethic, since it emphasizes the character of an agent as a moral determinant." Once Siri Sanga Bo assumed the throne, however, he failed to uphold the law with due rigor, and as a result his kingdom declined and he subsequently renounced the throne. The moral of the story, apparently, is that a king should "nourish the world with justice and righteousness," but Siri Sanga Bo failed to do this. Hallisey therefore concludes: "It would seem that this particular version of Siri Sanga Bo's life rejects an understanding of ethics along the lines of a virtue-theory."

This textual example is described as a "counterargument" (Hallisey 1996: 36) to the idea that Buddhism may be explicable in terms of any one ethical theory such as deontology, consequentialism, or virtue ethics, but it is not clear why this is so. In fact, I think the story is amenable to readings in terms of all three ethical theories. If I were to attempt a reconstruction of the deontological reading, I would suggest that the story identifies a conflict between duties: the general duty of nonviolence versus the duty of a king to enforce the law. This is a dilemma inherent in Buddhist kingship, and the story narrates the unfortunate consequences that follow when a king fails to resolve this dilemma correctly. A consequentialist might argue that what the story is really saying is that all that matters are consequences, in this case that kingdoms should prosper, and the conclusion to be drawn is that a king should always do that which will secure prosperity for his subjects. The story could also support a theory of virtue ethics. For example, if one of the virtues of a king is to enforce justice and Siri Sanga Bo did not possess the virtue of justice, then virtue ethics would seem to give a perfectly good account of why problems arose in his kingdom. Interestingly, Bartholomeusz cites the same story in her discussion of just-war thinking in Sri Lanka and comes to a similar conclusion to that of Hallisey. Quoting a reference made to "Sri Sangbo" by former president Jayawardene, she notes:

> In other words, invoking the Buddhist story of a Sri Lankan king who ruled without violence … President Jayawardene argued against virtue-ethics, in this case, against a literary paradigm of a king who acts from a sense of justice but nevertheless brings his kingdom to ruin.
>
> (Bartholomeusz 2002:65)

I think this gets things back to front, because arguably what the king signally *failed* to do was to display the virtue of justice by punishing evildoers and protecting the innocent. Instead he allowed himself to be influenced too much by the demands of *ahiṃsā*.

All the story of Siri Sanga Bo really shows is that the moral deliberations of Buddhists embrace a variety of concerns, including such matters as duties, virtues, and consequences. At this point particularists seem to want to forestall further discussion by saying that once competing theoretical interpretations of a story have been identified the impossibility of a meta-theory has *ipso facto* been demonstrated. But does it follow from the fact that we have several possible interpretations of a story that there cannot be a single comprehensive theory of Buddhist ethics? I don't think it does. I think we can agree it would be hard to resolve conclusively which reading is preferable simply at the level of the story itself. However, that does not mean that nothing more can be said, and by drawing more widely on the evidence from other narratives and Buddhist teachings it may be possible to show that the balance of evidence favors one interpretation over the other. This may well mean moving beyond the micro-level of texts and stories to a higher level of abstraction, but I see no reason why this may not be a legitimate thing to do.

W.D. Ross and Particularism

Believing he has correctly characterized Buddhist ethics as particularist, Hallisey associates it with an ethical theory developed by W.D. Ross. Ross outlined a list of seven "prima facie" duties that he thought summed up comprehensively, but not exhaustively, our main moral duties. He called them "prima facie" because at any given time a conflict may arise between

them, for example the duty of fidelity may conflict with the duty of justice. An example of this would be when keeping a promise to A would result in B being treated unfairly. In such a case one of the duties would have to give way to the other (in Ross' terminology the prima facie duty gives way to the *absolute obligation*). Because of this feature of ceding priority, Hallisey apparently understands Ross' theory as an example of particularism and as supporting the situationalism he sees in Buddhist sources. When discussing the *Discourse on Auspicious Things* (*Maṅgala-sutta*), for example, Hallisey states: "The canonical text itself appears to be a list of thirty-eight prima facie duties, in Ross' sense." However, this extensive and rambling list of good things is very far from Ross' integrated concept of moral duties, and I believe that Hallisey is mistaken in claiming Ross as a particularist ally. Ross would not accept a particularism in terms of which any theory or none can be applied according to context. Instead he believes that in every situation there is an absolute obligation, and this is the duty that must be performed. Situations thus only appear as what Hallisey calls "discursive sites" until the point at which the absolute obligation is determined. Ross' particularism thus extends only to identifying the true obligation – an obligation already embedded in the situation if not as yet clearly discerned – by sifting through the list of prima facie duties as a preliminary to identifying which should take precedence. I also disagree with Hallisey's suggestion (1996: 4) that "Ross's account of prima facie duties does not suggest that some moral principles are more important than others; it also eschews any attempt to discover any consistency in the things we take to matter morally." The distinction Ross makes between prima facie and absolute duties seems to show that he *does* suggest that some moral principles can be more important than others. Which principle takes precedence depends of course on the nature of the situation that presents itself, but one moral principle will always take priority. Furthermore, far from eschewing attempts to find consistency, Ross' ethical theory offers considerable consistency in its operation since all situations would be evaluated by reference to the same seven prima facie duties, and in similar situations similar outcomes would be predictable.

In fact, particularism doesn't tell us anything new. Anyone who has studied Buddhist ethics is already well aware that, at first sight at least, the data invites a variety of readings. Ethics is a complex subject, and Buddhist authors and sources may be as perplexed as anyone else as they face dilemmas and grope towards consistency and coherence in the moral life. While particularists, perhaps under the influence of relativism or postmodernism, seem content to throw in the towel at that point assuming that no one reading can be more successful than any another, others (such as me) believe it is legitimate to test the competing readings against one another and see which stands up best to critique. By analogy with natural science, when various theories are available it seems legitimate to ask if one makes better overall sense with respect to criteria such as simplicity, explanatory power, overall consistency, and the ability to deal with counter-examples. Various candidates have now been proposed for a single ethical theory of Buddhism,[3] and I think that far from asking the wrong questions these studies have advanced and refined our understanding of Buddhist ethics. Their success will be judged, among other things, by how well they can explain the apparent anomalies detected by particularists. If we can draw a parallel with ancient Greece, epic stories like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, along with numerous myths and fables, provided abundant material for reflection on ethics, and Greek philosophers drew on them to compose general theories of the good life that they believed gave comprehensive and consistent guidance on moral conduct. This same task now awaits students of Buddhist ethics.

The Just War in Sri Lanka

I have discussed the problems of particularism and the theories of W.D. Ross at some length because these provide the theoretical underpinning of Bartholomeusz's approach to the study of just war thinking in Sri Lanka. She writes, "I find useful Ross's language of prima facie responsibilities, and Hallisey's expression of them" (Bartholomeusz 2002: 26). And later: "As this study on just-war ideology in Buddhist Sri Lanka suggests so far, viewing Theravādin Buddhist ethics through both pluralism and the lens of prima facie duties, rather than only assuming a single ethical principle (such as pacifism), permits complicated readings of primary actors in religious stories" (Bartholomeusz 2002: 29). The "complicated readings" promised through this strategy turn out to be basically an acceptance that Buddhist ethics is chaotic and involves irreconcilable interpretations in the way particularists imagine. Thus Buddhists are forced to make a "complex rhetorical maneuver … to justify war, despite the assumption that war is morally problematic" (Bartholomeusz 2002: 109).

The moral problem that war presents for Buddhism is clear enough, but the theories of particularism and prima facie duties offer no satisfactory solution. They simply restate the problem and tell us that sometimes Buddhists feel war is justified and at other times not, leaving us with an unreconciled moral dualism. The closest these theories come to an explanation is to say that it all depends on "context," as when Bartholomeusz (2002: 162) writes: "Buddhists frame their discussions with a type of ethical particularism that can condemn or condone war, depending on the context." But what is it about the context that will lead Buddhists in one case to condemn and in another to condone? To this vital question there is no convincing answer. Can someone select whatever features of the context they like and declare those to be the determining ones? If so, particularism simply throws up its hands and declares the justification for war to be arbitrary. On one occasion the theory of prima facie duties is used to provide an explanation for the views of informants. When certain head monks report their view that war is only justified when the future of the country and religion are at stake, Bartholomeusz (2002: 150) interprets this as "an argument for Buddhist prima facie duties in contrast to ultimate obligations." But again, what is it that makes an obligation "ultimate"? I think someone like the Buddha might well say that the ultimate obligation is not to take life – as opposed to defending the *dharma* – but how is a disagreement of this kind between principles to be resolved, and who is to decide at what point a prima facie obligation is overridden? Apparently some kind of "weighing" takes place, but what precisely is being weighed in the balance and how is the weight of each component of the justification calibrated? In fact it is impossible to carry out an objective calculation in the way commonly imagined, for how are alternatives such as "the disappearance of the Dharma" to be weighted objectively against "the loss of x number of lives"? There is no common denominator to which the two options can be reduced. Thus although someone may come to a decision that one option is preferable, this is not the result of an objective calculation but the expression of a covert preference established before any weighing is attempted. In the last analysis, the theory of prima facie duties cannot give any clear criteria to determine when a duty can be overridden, and it amounts to little more than general advice to consider the demands of a list of common duties before coming to the decision to do whatever one feels intuitively to be "the right thing."

AN ALTERNATIVE THEORY OF THE
BUDDHIST JUST WAR

My argument for the rest of the chapter will be that the notion of prima facie duties is not the most helpful approach in developing a Buddhist theory of just war. Contrary to Hallisey and Bartholomeusz, I believe that the problem has been misdiagnosed: it is not that Buddhists slip and slide between different theories because no single one is inadequate to the task, but that a sufficiently comprehensive theory of just war has not so far been proposed. At the same time, I am fully in agreement with Bartholomeusz with regard to what she describes as the thesis of her book – "namely that Buddhists, not unlike other religious peoples, justify … war if certain conditions are met" (2002: xxi). What we disagree about is how to explain this at the level of moral theory, and whether Buddhist participation in war can be justified under the umbrella of a single theory. I think it can, and believe the traditional Western formulation of the just war doctrine is adequate to the task. Rather than introducing the notions of particularism and absolute or prima facie duties I think we can analyze it more appropriately through traditional Western just war teachings in conjunction with a very central Buddhist moral concept – the concept of intention (*cetanā*).

Western Just War Theory

In modern times interest in the concept of a just war has been revived as moralists, politicians, and military strategists ponder the moral dilemmas arising from the invention of nuclear weapons, the need for humanitarian intervention in situations such as Kosovo and Libya, and the prosecution of the "war on terror." Bartholomeusz draws on this theory herself, but on a particular modern version. Her understanding of Christian just war doctrine is informed in part by the work of James Childress, a writer well known in bioethical circles for the theory of the "four principles" he developed with Tom Beauchamp, a theory that in turn owes much to W.D. Ross. In terms of this version of principalism, the only way a conflict can be resolved is for one of the principles to be suspended or overridden. Bartholomeusz writes (2002: 39): "In other words, the just-war thinker would argue that, although the duty of peace is ineradicable, it can nonetheless be suspended for a time." The more traditional just war view as evolved by thinkers in the Christian tradition, however, would not hold that duties are "suspended" in the way suggested. I will summarize the main features of the traditional interpretation of just war doctrine below as a prelude to arguing that it can also serve as the foundation for a Buddhist just war theory.

One of the earliest thinkers to ponder the moral dilemma posed by war was St. Augustine (354–430 CE), and like successive Christian thinkers he developed the doctrine because of a perceived conflict between on the one hand the need to defend Christian communities and states against attack, and on the other religious teachings such as the commandment against killing and pacifist teachings such as the injunction to "turn the other cheek" (Matt. 5.38–41). Further refined by St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), the just war tradition eventually became the orthodox position in Christianity, although it was by no means universally accepted subsequently, as witnessed by the existence of Christian "Peace Churches" such as the Mennonites, Quakers, and Church of the Brethren.

Just war thinking has two main branches. The first concerns the conditions that need to be satisfied for going to war and is summed up in the Latin phrase *jus ad bellum* ("rightness in going to war"). The second, known as *jus in bello* ("rightness in the conduct of war"),

concerns things it is legitimate and not legitimate to do once a military campaign has been initiated. The general consensus among theorists is that certain conditions need to be satisfied for war to be declared, and once battle has been joined two broad principles govern its conduct. The conditions may be stated in various ways, but a typical formulation would be as set out below.

Principles of the Just War

Jus ad bellum

1   A war is just only if it is waged by a legitimate authority. Even just causes cannot be served by actions taken by individuals or groups who do not constitute an authority sanctioned by whatever the society and outsiders to the society deem legitimate.
2   A just war can only be fought with just cause, for example to redress a wrong suffered. Self-defense against an armed attack is always considered to be a just cause (although the justice of the cause is not sufficient). Furthermore, it is necessary that the belligerents should have a rightful intention, so that they intend the advancement of good, or the avoidance of evil.
3   Proportionality. The just cause must be of sufficient importance to justify recourse to armed defense. A war can only be just if it is fought with a reasonable chance of success. More specifically, the peace established after the war must be preferable to the peace that would have prevailed if the war had not been fought. Deaths and injury incurred in a hopeless cause are not morally justifiable.
4   A just war can only be waged as a last resort. All nonviolent options must be exhausted before the use of force can be justified.

Jus in bello

1   Proportionality. The violence used in the war must be *proportional* to the injury suffered. States are prohibited from using force not necessary to attain the limited objective of addressing the injury suffered.
2   Noncombatant immunity. The weapons used in war must *discriminate* between combatants and noncombatants. Civilians are never permissible targets of war, and every effort must be taken to avoid killing civilians. The deaths of civilians are justified only if they are unavoidable victims of a deliberate attack on a military target.
3   Peacemaking. War is acceptable only as a form of peacemaking. As Coates (1997: 280) writes, "A just war is a response to the breakdown or disruption of community, and its primary purpose is to restore a shattered community."

The traditional formulation of the theory makes no reference to prima facie duties, and the introduction of this notion only leads to confusion. The formulation as set out above offers a justification for the use of force that Buddhists could adopt. It is clear from Bartholomeusz's research in Sri Lanka that many Buddhists accept the need for a just war doctrine, agreeing with Elizabeth Anscombe (quoted in Coates 1997: 85) in seeing a logical and moral continuum embracing self-defense, law enforcement and war, and believing "only if it is in itself evil violently to coerce resistant wills, can the exercise of coercive power by rulers be bad as such." But, the Buddhist pacifist might object, do not the use of force and taking life

fly in the face of the First Precept? It is here that the importance Buddhism places on intention comes into play, for it would be possible for Buddhists – as for traditional just war theorists – to rely on the doctrine of "double effect" and take the view that the evils that are done in war are not directly intended but come about as undesired consequences of otherwise legitimate actions, in this case defending oneself against unjust aggression. Buddhist just war supporters could therefore claim that their motivation is not hatred of the enemy and that they have no intention to take life when they engage in defensive combat. They could, with justification, claim that the death or destruction of the enemy is not the outcome they seek and is not integral to their purpose. Their intention, properly defined, would be to use the minimum level of force needed to restrain aggression and defend their lives, accepting with regret that at times the minimum level of force needed may be of a lethal nature. From a Buddhist perspective, it could be argued that where there is no intention (*cetanā*) to cause death (as in the case of self-defense) there is no breach of the First Precept. Thus with virtually no modification the traditional Christian theory of just war could be adopted by Buddhists who feel that the use of force may be morally justified when governed by the just war principles of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* set out above.

CONCLUSION

Skeptical about the possibility of a meta-theory, ethical particularism sees Buddhist ethics as a moral lottery in which different theories are applied on different occasions depending on the subjective perspective of the agents. If this is true, it is a worrying conclusion because it would mean that the Buddhist moral life is capricious and unpredictable and that Buddhist ethics is inconsistent and at times self-contradictory. I think such inconsistency would be odd in a system of thought that otherwise prides itself on the rationality and coherence of its teachings and that sees its moral precepts as grounded in an eternal moral law. The theory of prima facie duties promises to bring at least a modicum of order into an otherwise chaotic picture and to offer a way of straddling the gulf between the strict pacifism of the early sources and the frequent use of violence in historical contexts. In the end, however, this gulf is insurmountable, and the theory offers no convincing explanation of how a rational choice between conflicting principles can be made.

In the final analysis, Buddhists, like Christians and followers of any other religion,[4] have a choice to make: they can be strict pacifists, or believe that the use of force is justified as a last resort. Clearly, there is a strong pacifist strand in Buddhism: this is an honorable and defensible position to adopt, and no doubt some Buddhists will prefer to follow the strict pacifism of the early canonical teachings and decide that to conduct a war morally is impossible. However, there is no explicit and systematic body of philosophical literature explaining how one accommodates this pacifist ideal to the realities of social and political life, and the assumption seems to have been that such matters are best left to the political authorities and are not appropriate subjects for religious concern. Historically, it seems that early Buddhist pacifism was superseded by (or perhaps coexisted alongside) a rudimentary "just war" philosophy, in terms of which some Buddhists tried to steer a dubious "middle way" relying on unconvincing justifications like compassion.

The just war tradition as developed in the West at least gives general guidance on when it is morally right to go to war and against whom it is justifiable to wage war, and it may provide a starting point for Buddhists who feel that strict pacifism is not the only moral stance available. As Perry Schmidt-Leukel (2004: 45) says, "political responsibility does

not really allow the choice between violence and non-violence. The only realistic choice is between lawful, just and well-intentioned violence on the one hand, and lawless, unjust, and evil-motivated forms of violence on the other." The principle underlying the moderate use of force in such circumstances seems little different from that which reasonable people everywhere accept is necessary for the maintenance of law and order in society.

NOTES

1   There are many excellent discussions of Buddhism and violence. For an annotated bibliography, see "Buddhist Ethics of Violence" by Stephen Jenkins, available from Oxford Bibliographies Online (http://www.oxfordbibliographiesonline.com).

2   I am grateful to the author for sending me copies of these publications that contain views that anticipate to some degree the reconstruction of the Buddhist position I develop below. I fully agree with the conclusion that "On the evidence of text and tradition, Buddhism does not condemn war in all circumstances." However, I do not believe this is because "Buddhist ethics possesses a context-dependent element rooted in the importance it gives to the empirical" (Harris 2003: 105) or because "the moral absolute of non-violence encouraged by the Theravada Canon can be overridden) (ibid.: 97). I do not think it is so much a question of overriding moral absolutes, as defining them more carefully at the outset. For this reason, I believe the Buddhist criteria for a just war can be stated *a priori*.

3   E.g., virtue ethics (Keown 1992), consequentialism (Goodman 2009), and deontology (Olson 1993).

4   Just war thinking, of course, is not confined to Christianity, and we find parallels in other religions, notably in the Islamic concept of *jihad*. A sophisticated approach to the morality of war is also found in the Chinese concept of *yi bing* or "righteous war" which emerged during the Warring States period (481–221 BCE). It would be interesting to know whether Buddhist thinkers in China subsequently engaged with this concept.

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PART IV
BIOGRAPHIES

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THE BUDDHA

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Richard P. Hayes

INTRODUCTION: GOING FOR REFUGE TO WHAT?

To be a Buddhist is to go for refuge to the three gems, namely, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. The central of these refuges is the Dharma, which is usually understood as the highest reality or highest goal (*paramārtha*), which is nirvana, the eradication of the root causes of troubled experience (*duḥkha*). By extension, the Dharma refuge may be understood as the wisdom that makes attaining nirvana possible, and by a further extension it may refer to the teachings that promote wisdom. What exactly those teachings are depends on the school of Buddhism one follows, for not all schools accept the same corpus of teachings as authoritative. The corpus of teachings that one follows also determines one's conception of what sort of being the Buddha is to whom one goes for refuge. Different schools depict the Buddha in different ways and report his teachings differently.

As appealing as it might be to write about the Buddha in terms of what he taught, we are in the position of having too many reports of what he taught and no intellectually defensible criterion by which we can decide which teachings are actually those of the Buddha. The best one can do, then, is to talk about what this or that particular text reports that the Buddha taught. And associated with each text is some notion of what sort of being the Buddha is (or was). In what follows a survey will be given of the range of views held by various Buddhists of what the Buddha was. Depending on one's temperament and conditioning, some depictions of the Buddha are likely to be more appealing than others. Some prefer a more human, others a more supernatural buddha. Some prefer an omniscient buddha, while others are content with one who is simply wiser than most and who is capable of offering insights that one might not have had on one's own. Some yearn for a buddha whose teachings are so mysterious that hardly anyone can grasp them, while others like the idea of a buddha whose teachings are very easy to understand but quite challenging to put into practice. In short, the Buddha to which one goes for refuge is a matter of taste, rather than a matter of fact. *De gustibus non est disputandum.*

HUMAN OR SUPERHUMAN?

Within a century or two of the Buddha's death, followers of his teachings had divided into numerous schools – the official number of early schools is eighteen, but when they are named in standard lists in canonical lists and commentaries, there are a few more. These schools debated a range of topics, including the nature of the Buddha, the nature of *arhant*s (people who had attained nirvana), the stages of the path to liberation, the ways that ordinary people differ from liberated people, the nature of the gods, the nature of the Buddhist community, the nature of nirvana, and various cosmological issues and ethical points. The outlines of these debates, and the positions taken by the different schools, are recorded in a text in the Pāli canon entitled *Kathāvatthu* and translated as *Points of Controversy* (Moggaliputta et al. 1969). In that text, attributed to one Moggaliputta Tissa, there are fourteen points of disagreement concerning the nature of a buddha, some of which are discussed here. They will be discussed in the order in which they occur in the *Kathāvatthu*.

The first controversy about the Buddha recorded in the *Kathāvatthu* pertains to the nature of his speech. Buddhists made a distinction between ordinary worldly language and elevated language that was superior in quality to normal speech. The superiority of this elevated discourse consisted in its being conducive to the attainment of liberation. So the question was whether everything that the Buddha said was an example of this elevated language, or whether he sometimes talked about things that were not aimed at inspiring his audience. Was the Buddha's every utterance a sermon? There were Buddhists who claimed that this was the case. The majority disagreed with that position and offered a variety of reasons for their disagreement. First, it was pointed out that if a Buddha spoke nothing but elevated language, and if everything he said was heard and understood as spiritually significant, then it would follow that only spiritually advanced adepts would be able to hear what he said, for only they would be able to follow its spiritual import (Moggaliputta et al. 1969: 134–36). It is known, however, that some people heard the Buddha speak and were not at all inspired by what they heard, so his speech could not be said to be conducive to their liberation. It is also known that some people who heard the Buddha were angered or offended or made resentful by his words, but anger and resentment are certainly not conducive to attaining nirvana, which is defined as the eradication of all lustful, angry, and deluded thoughts.

Moreover, it is known that some people were baffled and confused by what the Buddha said. Furthermore, some people who heard the Buddha speak had committed such heinous actions that they could not hope for liberation in this life, so his words were not conducive to their awakening and liberation. Taking all this into account, then, the majority of Buddhists whose views are reported in the *Kathāvatthu* did not take the position that the Buddha's speech had superhuman qualities or powers that could transform the mentalities of those who heard him speak. Rather, he spoke as ordinary human beings speak, and those who were ripe to benefit from hearing what he said to them progressed further along the path to liberation, and others who were not mature or wise enough to benefit remained for the most part unchanged by what they heard.

While Moggaliputta records that the Buddha's speech was not necessarily endowed with superhuman powers, he also reports that the majority of Buddhists believed that he was extraordinary in various other ways and that his attainments were unmatched, even by other awakened and liberated men and women (Moggaliputta et al. 1969: 139–143). So the Buddha is unique (at least in recent history) in that he became awakened and liberated entirely by himself without the aid of a teacher. Narratives in the Buddhist canons routinely

report that he could discern exactly the degree of spiritual attainment of other people, and he was able to see what their destinies were after they had died. He knew all of their previous births and what karmic fruition had led to their being as they are in the present life. He could know the thoughts and emotions and intentions of anyone with whom he came into contact. He could heal serious wounds just by thinking about them and wishing them healed. He could walk on water, levitate himself, and even cause crowds of people to rise in the air and be transported across swollen rivers. He could instantly transport himself distances that would normally require walking an entire day. Although none of these powers were considered unique – they were the common stock of all highly accomplished yogis – they were certainly out of the reach of ordinary people and beyond the reach of most awakened and liberated people. Not all his disciples, and not even all his most accomplished disciples, could claim to have such powers. It would be a mistake to think of the Buddha as just another very good teacher who had a gift for helping others attain insights.

Because the Buddha was described as "of all two-footed creatures the highest and best and foremost and uttermost, supreme, unequalled, unrivaled, peerless, incomparable, unique," it followed that he was more worthy of receiving tribute than any other being in the universe, including the gods to whom offerings were made in daily sacrifices and rituals. A gift given to the Buddha could not but bring great rewards to the donor, much greater than a comparable gift bestowed on someone else, and an aggression against the Buddha would bring more serious consequences than a similar act against an ordinary person.

One set of issues that Moggaliputta records in some detail concerns whether the Buddha was a flesh-and-blood human being who actually lived in the world of ordinary people (Moggaliputta et al. 1969: 323–326). There were Buddhists who held the view (based, says a commentary to the text, on a careless reading of scripture) that the Buddha did not actually visit the human world but projected from heaven a likeness of a human being to mingle with sentient beings on the earth. This apparitional being, they said, only seemed to be born, to be injured, to become ill, and to die. And all the teachings that people believe to have been the sermons of the Buddha, said followers of this school, were really taught by this apparition or, in another version of this general belief, by the Buddha's cousin and attendant, Ānanda.

Another school of Buddhists argued that the Buddha, being completely dispassionate, never actually felt such emotions as sadness or revulsion on seeing others suffer, and so he never actually had pity or compassion for anyone, nor did he ever experience love for anyone. Against all these claims that the Buddha was either an apparition or a passionless and therefore unfeeling being it is difficult to find arguments.

On most controversial issues Moggaliputta records arguments that could be used to dissuade one from holding what he held to be the wrong view, but for these claims he offers a simple denial of their truth and offers instead an assertion, without trying to back it up. He claims that the Buddha was a human being born of a human mother and that he grew from infancy to adulthood, and as an adult he was vexed by the suffering he witnessed and sought to find a means of eradicating it and out of deep compassion taught humanity a way of thinking and practice that if followed would alleviate avoidable forms of suffering. There is only one claim of the Buddha's extraordinariness that is met with a sort of counterfactual argument, and that is the claim that all the Buddha's excreta smelled lovely and had none of the unpleasant qualities that ordinary human excreta have. The argument that Moggaliputta offers against that claim is that if it were true, then people would have followed the Buddha around and collected his excrement and used it for perfumes and bathing, but there is no record of any of that sort of behavior. One final controverted issue on how the Buddha

differs from ordinary human beings concerned the claim made by some Buddhists that the Buddha filled all of space and could be found everywhere at once. (Moggaliputta et al. 1969: 354–55). This claim, being a difficult one to dispute with rational argumentation, was gently set aside with a question that asked, in effect, "Do you really believe that?"

The claims and counterclaims that have been examined in this section all have to do with the Buddha's humanity. The majority of Buddhists, according to Moggaliputta, drew inspiration from the view that the Buddha was born as all human beings are born and that he overcame the difficulties of life by changing his own attitudes and adjusting his own behavior. What the Buddha did anyone can do, and that is precisely his appeal. If the Buddha is characterized as supernatural or transcendental, then he might be something to marvel at and be amazed by, but he would not be a role model for human beings to gain liberation by following. More about this insistence that the Buddha was remarkable for his achievements but so similarly constituted to the rest of us that we all have the ability to make similar achievements will be explored in the next section.

HOW OMNISCIENT WAS THE BUDDHA?

The Buddha is often described as all-knowing (*sarvajña*). While there may be widespread agreement that he deserves that description, there is room for disagreement on what is included in the word "all." One formula of praise found in the Theravāda tradition contains the two words "*vijjācaraṇasaṃpanno*" (endowed with knowledge and conduct) and "*lokavidū*" (knower of the world or of people). As was mentioned above, the Buddha is routinely portrayed as knowing people's past lives and their destinies after they have died, and he is depicted as being capable of knowing the thoughts, emotional states, and intentions of other people and of the gods. J. N. Jayatilleke (1963) reports a Theravādin conviction that the Buddha can know anything that he wishes to know, but that he does not (unlike some characterizations of God) know everything at once. On that account, his being all-knowing amounts to his having the potential to know anything in as much detail as he wishes just by turning his thought to it. (This raises the interesting question of whether it would be possible to gain detailed knowledge about something about which he does not have enough of a general knowledge to turn his mind to it. Could he, for example, know the nature of the Higgs boson even before Peter Higgs and others predicted its existence by the standard model of particle physics?)

One Buddhist philosopher who addressed the issue of the limits of the Buddha's knowledge was Dharmakīrti, who probably wrote sometime in the early seventh century CE. In his most lengthy treatise, *Commentary on Valid Cognition* (*Pramāṇvārttikam*; PV), there is an entire chapter dedicated to showing that the Buddha was a reliable authority, at least on questions of central importance to human beings. In making his case for the Buddha's authority, Dharmakīrti makes it clear that he is *not* claiming that the Buddha has unlimited knowledge of the sort that some people ascribe to God. There is no need for Godlike omniscience, he says, because the only thing that people need is someone who can give them instructions on how to reach a goal – instructions that will not let them down and lead to disappointment. The most important goal that people seek to reach is the eradication of the root causes of distress. What people need is someone who can give clear advice on what to do and what to avoid doing if one wishes to attain nirvana. "Therefore," writes Dharmakīrti, "one should examine the authority's opinions about what ought to be undertaken. Of what use to us is his thorough knowledge about the total number of insects?" (PV 1.33).

It turns out that for Dharmakīrti the only thing a reliable authority need know is the nature of distress (*duḥkha*), the causes of distress that if eliminated will lead to the elimination of distress, and the method of eliminating those causes. All other knowledge is superfluous. The Buddha, says Dharmakīrti, taught exactly those things that an authority needs to know. As a final move, Dharmakīrti claims that all those things that the Buddha taught can be confirmed by each person who puts the teachings to a practical test. It is not necessary to accept them purely on the basis of faith in the Buddha's reliability. By portraying the Buddha as having a limited omniscience – that is, an omniscience only about matters of true importance – Dharmakīrti avoids making potentially distracting claims that would be difficult to defend, and he delivers the entire body of the Buddha's teachings to the realm of empirical experience and reason, thereby putting it within the reach of everyone who is willing to experiment and think.

HOW MANY BUDDHAS?

All the early Buddhist literature agrees that Gautama, the Buddha who delivered the teachings that have been continually transmitted down through the centuries, and who founded the order that has transmitted the teachings and striven to exemplify them, was preceded by other buddhas who in eons long past had discovered the same truths, taught them, and established similar organizations. The schools of Buddhism that adhered to the narrowest range of canonical texts were all in agreement that there can be only one buddha at a time, and indeed only one buddha within living memory. This is so because a buddha is defined as one who discovered the important truths about the true nature of distress and discovered the path leading to the eradication of that distress and made these discoveries without the aid of being taught by another. Others may learn the principles conveyed in those teachings and apply them to gain the same degree of liberation from the root causes of distress as Gautama the Buddha, but there is only one discoverer. Eventually all memory of the teachings will be lost, it is predicted, and society will go into such a state of decline that people will barely live long enough to reach the age where they can reproduce. After some time of humanity's being plunged into decadence and misery, another person will come along who will discover the same truths that Gautama discovered and teach them. That will be the Buddha Maitreya. In any given epoch, however, there is only one buddha and only one program (*śāsana*) given by that buddha.

Eventually there arose the notion that there are just three kinds of fully liberated beings. There are consummate buddhas (*samyaksambuddha*), who discover the truth without being taught and transmit it through an organized community. There are solitary buddhas (*pratyekabuddha*), who discover the truth on their own but do not teach it or found an organized community. There are *arhant*s, who receive the truth from a teacher, apply it, and become liberated. It is the consummate buddha that can arise only once within an epoch.

The view of the narrowly canonical schools (*śrāvakayāna*) that has been outlined so far was not the only view among Buddhists. In the Mahāyāna, which accepted an expanded textual canon, there are less restrictive notions of how many buddhas there are at any given time. There is a genre of texts describing happy or easy lands (*sukhavatī bhūmi*), better known in English as pure lands (see article by Jones in this volume). The general theme in this genre of texts is that a bodhisattva practiced assiduously for many eons and then dedicated all the merit acquired through his wholesome practices to the creation of a land of happiness into which people from this world can be born (or enter through the imagination)

to continue their journey to nirvana without the burdens and distractions of this burdensome world (*sahaloka*). By far the best known of these lands of ease is the one created in the western quarter by the Buddha Amitābha; somewhat less known is the happy land in the eastern quarter founded by the Buddha Akṣobhya.

RIGHT BUDDHA, WRONG BUDDHAS?

The proliferation of buddhas in Mahāyāna led naturally to the question of how all these buddhas were related to one another and what exactly they had in common that made it appropriate to apply the same label to all of them. One attempt to address this question is found in the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra*, commonly known in English as the Lotus (or White Lotus) Sutra. This text asserts that all the buddhas are manifestations of a single entity known as Śākyamuni Buddha, described in the text as beginningless and endless. This eternal entity is said to have attained nirvana countless eons ago, but, in contrast to the story of Gautama Buddha in the narrowly canonical schools, Śākyamuni did not exit from the world of rebirth. He chose instead to remain in the world of suffering to provide guidance to all sentient beings, all of whom are destined to attain awakening and nirvana eventually. Not only is Gautama Buddha a manifestation of Śākyamuni, according to the *Lotus Sutra*, but so are all the countless buddhas.

The goal of Buddhist practice in this view is not to become so disenchanted with the lure of the world of rebirth that one loses all desire to be reborn and so exits the world, but rather to participate in the fullness of Śākyamuni's fatherly love and wisdom. The only method of participating fully in the Buddha's wisdom, says the *Lotus Sutra*, is through the *Lotus Sutra* itself. Clinging to what is taught in other Buddhist texts is an obstacle to gaining the liberating wisdom taught solely in the *Lotus Sutra*. The view of Śākyamuni Buddha presented in the *Lotus Sutra* proved to be appealing, especially in East Asia (see article by Daniel Métraux in this volume). In some quarters the claim that all buddhas were manifestations of Śākyamuni and not independent buddhas led to the charge that those who worshiped Amitābha or Akṣobhya should acknowledge that they were in fact showing devotion to a form of Śākyamuni. In Japan of the Kamakura era (1185–1333), for example, Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–1282) argued that social chaos in Japan was the result of the failure of the government to recognize that there is only one true and correct form of Buddhism, namely, the form that recognizes the *Lotus Sutra* as the most perfect expression of the Buddha's teaching and recognizes Śākyamuni as the true Buddha rather than Amitābha or any of the other buddhas mentioned in Mahāyāna texts other than the *Lotus Sutra*.

SOCIAL REFORMER?

Down through the ages, the Buddha came to be depicted as a reformer of sorts. In some texts he was portrayed as having such a concern for the well-being of animals that he was opposed to using them for food and clothing, and in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries he came to be portrayed as a reformer of human society and even as a champion of democracy.

The regulations laid down for his disciples who left the domestic life for one of mendicancy stipulate that there are types of animal flesh that monks should not accept even if they are offered – human flesh and the flesh of certain snakes and mammals and birds were forbidden – but in general a monk was expected to eat whatever food was offered by

a householder. If the offering was some kind of non-proscribed animal flesh, the monk was to accept it unless he suspected the animal had been killed and cooked especially as an offering to monks. If the flesh was left over from a meal prepared for the family, however, the monk should accept it. The principal reason for the rule against accepting food made from animals bought, killed, and cooked explicitly for monks seems to have been a consideration of the financial burden this might place on the family making the offering, rather than a concern for the animals.

Followers of the narrow canonical schools continued to follow those guidelines. They also interpreted a passage in the story of the Buddha's death, which says that his death was hastened by eating a meal called "pig's delicacy," as meaning that he had eaten pork that had gone bad.

In the literature of the expanded canonical schools, however, there were several texts that stated in no uncertain terms that no Buddha ate animal flesh and that no bodhisattva should eat animal flesh or eggs or honey or dairy products. The Mahāyāna sūtra called "The introduction of the True Dharma to Laṅkā" (*Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*) has an entire chapter dedicated to these issues. Since the bodhisattva is one who has vowed to alleviate the suffering of all sentient beings, it would be counterproductive for a bodhisattva to have the smell of animal flesh on the breath, since that would surely frighten animals away. Also stealing honey or milk or wool from the animals that produced them would be an obstacle to the animals' having trust in the human bodhisattvas, thereby being an obstacle to the bodhisattva's getting close enough to alleviate the animals' suffering. Along with this prohibition of eating animal flesh or taking from animals what they have not voluntarily given, there is an interpretation of the death of the Buddha from eating "pig's delicacy" as meaning that he ate some kind of food that a pig would find delicious, rather than a delicacy made from the flesh of a pig. There is also a claim that those Buddhists who transmit the teaching that the Buddha taught that monks may eat the flesh of non-proscribed animals are destined for hell for transmitting a false teaching. There is no mistaking the message of the sūtra that eating animals or taking from them what is theirs is contrary to the Buddha's practice of wisdom and his compassion to all living beings.

On the issue of social reform, the narrowly canonical schools of Buddhism portrayed the Buddha Gautama as a member of the warrior (*kṣatriya*) caste who questioned the claims of members of the *brāhmaṇa* caste that theirs was the highest of the four social groups (*varṇa*) of Indian society. In some dialogues, he is depicted as claiming that the warrior caste may in fact be higher than the *brāhmaṇa*s, since the warriors had stricter regulations to ensure purity of pedigree. There is little in the early canonical texts that portrays Gautama as questioning the system of caste altogether or as championing social equality. The earliest Buddhist community was hardly depicted as a populist movement interested in social and economic justice. There are two texts in the *Longer Discourses* of the Buddha (*Dīgha-nikāya*) that represent him saying that long ago there was a time when people were spontaneously virtuous and that a long decline from that condition came about as a result of some people becoming greedy and hoarding food, thus creating shortages that forced desperate people into thievery. Texts with stories such as that can be used as a basis for the claim that the Buddha favored an equitable distribution of resources, but such works are relatively scarce in the long Buddhist tradition until relatively recent times. The scarcity of such sources did not prove to be an obstacle to a popular image of the Buddha as at least a social reformer and even a kind of radical.

A number of nineteenth- and twentieth-century authors portrayed the Buddha as a man motivated by the injustices of the Hindu caste system. No one pursued this line of thought more thoroughly than Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (1891–1956), a man born into the stratum of Indian society called the untouchables (before the category of untouchability was outlawed in the constitution of independent India that Ambedkar played a significant role in drafting). It was Ambedkar's conviction that any division of society into rigid classes determined by birth would inevitably result in social hierarchy and inequality. When Ambedkar converted to Buddhism, he carried into his conversion the conviction that the Buddha had had similar convictions. In his posthumously published *The Buddha and his Dhamma*, Ambedkar writes that the Buddha "argued that a religion which does not preach equality is not worth having" (Ambedkar 1984: 221). In the chapter on the structure of the "fraternity" (as Ambedkar preferred to render the term "sangha," in keeping with his conviction that the Buddha anticipated the values of the French revolution by espousing Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity), he points out that there was no caste within the order of renunciants, that members of all levels of society and both genders were accepted, and that everyone within the order of mendicants was equal (Ambedkar 1984: 305–6). This equality, he says, extended even to the Buddha himself, who observed exactly the same rules he laid out for everyone else in the Buddhist sangha (Ambedkar 1984: 421–22). In the last hours before his death, the Buddha did not appoint a successor, because, in Ambedkar's account of one of the Buddha's last speeches,

> The controversies regarding the path cannot be settled by a dictator. The decision of a controversy should be reached by the fraternity. The whole conjoint body should assemble and then settle it conformably with such agreement. Majority agreements is the way to settle the disputes and not the appointment of a successor.
>
> (Ambedkar 1984: 395)

WHAT MANNER OF MAN WAS THIS?

One of the earliest attempts to write a history of the institution of Buddhism is preserved in the section of the canon that lays out rules for the mendicant community. There we find a conversation between the Buddha and an Ājīvika wanderer, in which the Ājīvika asks Gautama whether he is a man or a god. Neither of those possibilities is affirmed. Instead Gautama declares that he is a *tathāgata*, a term capable of several interpretations. It literally means "one who has gone (or come) like this." Perhaps it was an early way of saying "what you see is what you get." What people have seen in the Buddha has varied with the age. The trend among Western scholars (and many Western Buddhists) since the early twentieth century has been to see a remarkably wise and thoughtful and kind-hearted man upon whom tradition has superimposed a bundle of superhuman attributes. Modern biographers such as Michael Carrithers (1983), H.W. Schumann (1989), and A.K. Warder (1980) have gone that route, following the lead of B.R. Ambedkar. What the Buddha would have thought of any of the attempts of Buddhists to characterize him is anyone's guess.

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CHAPTER THIRTY

NĀGĀRJUNA

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Joseph Walser

INTRODUCTION

From about the first century BCE onward, Buddhism produced a number of "celebrity philosophers," figures like Vasumitra, Ghoṣaka, Dharmatrāta, and Buddhadeva of the *Mahāvibhāṣa* who are known far more by the doctrines they espoused than by anything they did. Today, these four Vaibhāṣika masters are generally classified as the pivotal thinkers in early Sarvāstivāda Buddhism. By all accounts, the first celebrity philosopher to be identified as a Mahāyānist is Nāgārjuna, the ostensive founder of the Madhyamaka school of Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy. Indeed, for a number of complicated reasons, it is Nāgārjuna's thought that ended up casting the longest shadow in Buddhist philosophical history through his influence on other pivotal writers in Himalayan, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean Buddhism. Even outside of strictly Buddhist circles, Nāgārjuna continues to be studied as a philosopher in contemporary universities.

WORKS

There are dozens of extant works ascribed to Nāgārjuna in Sanskrit, Chinese, and Tibetan. These represent a number of different genres and interests. First and foremost, we have a number of treatises of a logical nature such as the *Fundamental Verses on the Middle Way* (the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, see, e.g., Garfield 1995), which is by all accounts his *magnum opus*. It consists of twenty-seven chapters of arguments against the possibility of essence, "*svabhāva*"; (see below under "Philosophy"). Another is the *Dispeller of Disputes* (the *Vigrahavyāvartanī*, see Westerhoff 2010), constituting a rebuttal of Naiyāyika criticisms of the *Fundamental Verses*. There are also two epistles written (ostensibly) to kings giving advice on politics and spiritual practice: the *Jeweled Garland* (*Ratnāvalī*, see Hopkins 1998), and the *Letter to a Friend* (the *Suhṛllekha*, see Kawamura 1975). And there are a number of devotional hymns attributed to Nāgārjuna, such as the *Hymn to the Incomparable* (*Niraupamyastava,* see Lindtner 1990: 121–62), or the *Hymn to the Inconceivable* (the *Acintyastava*).[1] The Chinese tradition (and to a much lesser extent the Tibetan) has also preserved commentaries on Mahāyāna sūtras ascribed to Nāgārjuna such as the voluminous *Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra* (*Mahāprajñāpāramitopadeśa-śāstra*, see

Lamotte 1966–80), and an anthology of Mahāyāna sūtras ascribed to Nāgārjuna (the *Sūtrasamuccāya*, see Pāsādika 1989). Finally, the Tibetan tradition has preserved a large body of medical, alchemical, and tantric treatises ascribed to Nāgārjuna (the main tantric work ascribed to him is the *Five-Fold Approach*, *Pañcakrama*, a text of the Guhyasamāja lineage).

It is highly likely that he wrote some of these texts and equally unlikely that he wrote all of them. Exactly where to draw the line between authentic and inauthentic works is, and will certainly remain, a contentious issue. Indeed, the issue of which treatises are authentic and which are not is perhaps the most critical and yet the most difficult issue in Nāgārjuna studies, because all else depends on how one deals with this question. How we understand his biography as well as the trajectory of his intellectual career are entirely dependent on which texts we ascribe to him and in which order. And yet the scholar who expects "proof" that Nāgārjuna wrote any of these will be waiting a long time, since ironclad criteria for making such a determination are simply not available.

Of the authenticity of the *Fundamental Verses* there can be no debate since Nāgārjuna's authorship of that work is taken to be axiomatic. Once we move beyond the *Fundamental Verses*, however, opinions begin to diverge. Scholars adopt longer or shorter lists of "authentic" works depending on their personal interests and tolerance for uncertainty. Naturally, their conclusions about the import of Nāgārjuna's output will reflect to some extent which texts they include as authentic and which they dismiss. For example, A.K. Warder (1973), adopting perhaps the most conservative stance, argues that the only work we can be certain Nāgārjuna wrote is the *Fundamental Verses*. From this starting point, he goes on to argue that because the work does not mention any Mahāyāna works by name, we have no reason to assume Nāgārjuna was a Mahāyānist.[2]

Most scholars operate with a more expanded list of "authentic" Nāgārjuna texts, and yet there is no real consensus. When all is said and done, the best we can do is to arrive at some sense of the *probability* that a given text is authentic or not. In general, the criteria scholars use to assign a text to Nāgārjuna are the following (in order of importance):

1   similarity in doctrine and style to the *Fundamental Verses*;
2   the testimony of and quotations by other early Indian scholars; and
3   the testimony of non-Indic scholars/translators.

Conversely, if there is internal evidence suggesting a later date than the assumed date of Nāgārjuna (sometime in the second or early third century CE), or if a work is ascribed to someone else in an earlier source, either of these factors will disqualify a text as authentic. Finally, Tilmann Vetter (1992) and Drasko Mitrikeski (2008) have put the technique of metrical analysis to good use to determine (or at least to provide interesting supporting evidence for or against) the authenticity of a number of texts ascribed to Nāgārjuna.

The first criterion, for better or worse, favors works that are logical in nature such as the *Dispeller of Disputes* over treatises dealing with other themes, such as the *Hymn to the Incomparable*, since the *Fundamental Verses* does deal primarily with argumentation. On the other hand, we may get a different picture if we privilege testimony of other authors or metrics, since neither one of these necessarily privileges the logical corpus. Clearly, none of these criteria are anywhere near foolproof, since doctrine and style can be mimicked by anyone who had memorized the texts of the master (i.e., any later pupil). By the same token, we must also take the testimony of later Indian scholars with a grain of salt, since the

earliest of these is Bhāviveka, who may well have lived some 300 years after Nāgārjuna himself. Finally, even metrical analysis has its problems since idiosyncratic patterns of *vipulā* (patterned irregularities in the caesura of a certain kind of poetic meter) of a single author may change over a twenty-year writing career, making deviations in use of *vipulā* a bit problematic in ruling out a work as authentic.

Though there is not enough space to get into the knotty problems around each of the texts ascribed to Nāgārjuna, I refer the reader to the work of Christian Lindtner, who in his *Nāgārjuniana* assesses the authenticity of a number of works ascribed to Nāgārjuna (although by no means all). He sums up his findings by classifying texts attributed to Nāgārjuna into four categories: "genuine," "decidedly spurious," "perhaps authentic," and "probably not genuine." While Lindtner's judgments on each of these texts are not unimpeachable,[3] and many of his attributions have been, and will continue to be, contested, his remains a work of great erudition and provides a good baseline for subsequent scholarship to argue for or against.

BIOGRAPHY

If we take into consideration his fame and influence, it is a bit surprising how little we know about Nāgārjuna's life, especially considering how much has been written about him in traditional sources. Indeed, the problem is that hagiographical accounts of Nāgārjuna give us far too much information – and most of it conflicting (see Walser 2005: 66–79). The bits of information that have come down to us about Nāgārjuna fall onto a continuum ranging from reasonably reliable to largely poetic license. Since pretty much anything one would wish to say about Nāgārjuna's writing rests on some set of tacit biographical assumptions (e.g., whom he is writing for, whom is he writing about, etc.), maintaining a studied agnosticism about his biography serves only to divert attention from the assumptions one has already made. The best policy is to be explicit about the nature of the evidence on which our assumptions are based and proceed from there.

Of two things we can be fairly certain. First, according to two sixth-century catalogues of Buddhist texts translated into Chinese, Dharmarakṣa translated a work called the *Treatise Commentary on the Sūtra of Ten Stages* (the *Daśabhūmika-vibhāṣa-śāstra*) in 265 CE that he ascribes to Nāgārjuna. Whether or not Nāgārjuna wrote the text, Dharmarakṣa's ascription of it to Nāgārjuna is the earliest dated reference to him and thus provides us with an upper limit for his dates. If we look for a lower limit for his dates, we must turn to his philosophy. His main philosophical treatises are consistent in their teaching of the doctrine of emptiness. While this idea does occur throughout Buddhist canonical texts, Nāgārjuna's version of the doctrine of emptiness has much more in common with Perfection of Wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*) literature. While the earliest version of the *Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines* is generally given a range from the first century BCE to the first century CE, Nāgārjuna's version of emptiness is more specific than what is typically portrayed in that text: he argues for "emptiness of essence" (*svabhāvena śūnyatā*). Whereas there are a number of discussions of the emptiness of essence in the current Sanskrit version of the *Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines*, there are far fewer in the earliest extant version translated by Lokakṣema in 179 CE. On the other hand, we hear much more of this doctrine in the *Perfection of Wisdom in 25,000 Lines,* which was written later – most likely in the first half of the second century CE.

Thus, we begin with a date range for Nāgārjuna's literary activities between ca. 100 CE and 265 CE – a period of roughly 165 years. If we want to get any more precise regarding

the date or location of Nāgārjuna's writing activities, we must introduce evidence that is increasingly speculative. Beginning in the fifth century, translators of two letters Nāgārjuna ostensibly addressed to a king, the *Letter to a Friend* (the *Suhṛllekha*) and the *Jeweled Garland* (the *Ratnāvalī*), left clues as to whom they thought the addressee was. Guṇavarman names the king "Chantaka," while Yijing calls him "Shiyindeka" who was a Sātavāhana (see Walser 2005: 63–64). If the latter attribution is correct, then it makes sense that Chantaka and Shiyindeka are both renderings of "Dhanyakaṭaka," the Sātavāhana capital in the eastern Deccan next-door to the Amaravatī stūpa. But if this is the case, then we are looking at the end of the Sātavāhana dynasty, since the Sātavāhanas did not rule there until the second century CE.

The next step would be to look at the *Jeweled Garland* itself, in which Nāgārjuna instructs the king to repeat twenty stanzas in front of an image of the Buddha three times every day (*Ratnāvalī*, v. 495). For the king to recite these stanzas in front of an image of the Buddha in the Deccan, it would have to be around Dhanyakaṭaka during the reign of Yajñā Śrī (r. 170–98 CE) or later, since there are no anthropomorphic images of the Buddha anywhere in the Deccan before this. If this is correct, then we have a date range for Nāgārjuna's composition of the *Jeweled Garland* and can surmise the dates of his other works depending on their relation to this text.

Beyond his date and geographical location, we know that he was a Buddhist monk, although it is not entirely clear what his sectarian affiliation might have been. If, however, we examine the *Fundamental Verses* carefully, we find that there are certain sectarian positions that Nāgārjuna does not attack, such as those of the Mahāsaṃghikas and the Saṃmitīyas. It may well be that Nāgārjuna wrote that work for either a Mahāsaṃghika or a Saṃmitīya audience (Walser 2005: 224–65).

As for Nāgārjuna's caste, it is likely that Kumārajīva's assertion that he was a brahmin is correct (T. 2047a: 184a19–22). Nāgārjuna writes in elegant Sanskrit (the first Buddhist author to do so?) and was familiar with the *Śatapatha Brahmana*,[4] suggesting that he may have been born into either the Kaṇva or Vajaseneya śākha of the *Śuklayajurveda*. If this were the case, we may well want to consider that Nāgārjuna's rise to prominence (or the probability that he actually had the ear of Yajñā Śrī Satkarṇī) may not have been exclusively a function of his brilliance in expounding Buddhist doctrine (which I do not dispute), but may also have been related to his family and their status as prominent brahmins in a dynasty in which the *aśvamedha* was still an important source of royal legitimation.

If, as Mitrikeski has argued (2008, 2009), Nāgārjuna penned one or more of the devotional hymns that are ascribed to him, it is likely that he did so in the Andhra region as well, since hymns such as the *Hymn to the Incomparable* share a number of metrical features with the *Jeweled Garland*. He argues that these hymns also share a number of philosophical features with other texts that are known to have been composed in the Andhra region in the later Sātavāhana dynasty or early Ikṣvāku dynasty (see below under *Dharmadhātu* and *Dharmakāya*).

NĀGĀRJUNA'S PHILOSOPHY OF EMPTINESS[5]

It is the philosophy of Nāgārjuna that has attracted the most attention of modern scholars, many of whom interpret him as anticipating insights of Wittgenstein, Post-structuralism, or Whitehead. I would suggest that there are strong affinities, if not actual historical connections, between the theories of language in which Nāgārjuna was interested and those of many of the

twentieth-century philosophers with whom he is compared. To explain this, I suggest we look to indigenous explanations of his thought to discern possible historical connections between those concerns and those of Nāgārjuna's modern-day counterparts. In indigenous terms, the best way to characterize his philosophy (or at least the bulk of his logical works) would be to say that he is a *śūnyavādin* (an advocate of universal emptiness) or a *niḥsvabhāvavādin* (advocate of the essencelessness of all things). However, one cannot come to an adequate understanding of what these positions mean without an understanding of how he comes to them. In other words, even without taking sides in the later *prasaṅgika*/*svatantrika* debates over whether or not he in fact has a thesis, there is an important respect in which Nāgārjuna's method *is* his message. Methodologically we can say that Nāgārjuna seeks to establish the essencelessness of phenomena by a series of *reductio ad absurdum* arguments. In these arguments, we find contradictory assertions negated, leaving the reader with neither horn of the dilemma to grab hold of. In every case, the failure of the argument stems from the fact that he has set up the problem in such a way that one or two of the terms must be treated as if they had a context-independent value. The apparent resulting paradox can therefore only be avoided if one rejects the presupposition that any of the items in the argument possesses an independent value. In short, the failure of each argument to arrive at a definitive proposition forces the reader to accept a kind of semantic holism (or better yet, "semantic anatomism")[6] in which all relations turn out to be internal ones. All phenomena are thus empty of their own value (*niḥsvabhāva*) because they exist solely as part of a set of internal relations with other things – such that there are no things, only relations. We might want to respond then that if things don't exist by virtue of their relations, then surely the relationship that we characterize as "emptiness" must in fact exist. While later Yogācāras do adopt this stance (see *Madhyānta-vibhāga* 1.1–2), Nāgārjuna assiduously avoids it, presumably because for one to say that the relationship "exists" while the relata do not one would either have to equivocate on the word "exists," or use the word "relationship" in some non-standard way.

In a series of articles spanning fifteen years, Kamaleshwar Bhattacharya points out that Nāgārjuna's logic in this chapter capitalizes on certain concepts standard to Sanskrit grammar. In the following, I will review his thesis, which has not received nearly as much attention as it deserves. Nāgārjuna's chapter on going begins with the following three verses:

1   What has been traversed is not being traversed. What has not yet been traversed is not being traversed. What is being traversed, apart from what has been traversed and what has not yet been traversed, is not being traversed.
2   [The opponent contends:] (It may be said that) where there is actual movement (*ceṣṭā*), there is going (*gati*) and to the extent that (*yataḥ*) movement is in what is being traversed, not in what has already been traversed nor in what has not yet been traversed, to that extent (*tataḥ*), going (*gati*) is in what is being traversed.
3   How will a traversing that is in what is being traversed be suitable, when what is being traversed that is devoid of going is not at all suitable?

The Sanskrit verbal root √*gam* indicates motion or "going." While we generally consider the infinitive "to go" as denoting a meaningful event, in Sanskrit grammatical theory a verb can only denote a sequence of occurrences when it stands in relation to a set of auxiliary elements called *kārakas*. Any reader familiar with the grammatical tradition coming after Pāṇini would have known these to include the agent (*kārtṛ*), the object or destination

(*karman*), the instrument (*karaṇa*), the locus (*adhikaraṇa*), the origin (*apādāna*) and the goal (*sampradāna*). These roughly correspond to the nominative, accusative, instrumental, locative, ablative, and dative cases respectively. According to Patañjali (*Mahābhāṣya* I.258: l. 11), "action is the special mode of behavior of the accessories." Hence, the action denoted by a verb is an action *only* by virtue of the coordinated contribution of its auxiliary elements. Consider, for example, the sentence:

> Sarah goes from New York to Boston by bus on the New York Throughway.

In this sentence, Sarah is the agent (*kartṛ*), New York is the origin (*apādāna*), Boston is the destination (*karman*), the bus the instrument (*karaṇa*), and the New York Throughway is the locus (*adhikaraṇa*) in which she does her travelling. If any one of the above *kārakas* were to be negated, the very idea of motion applied to Sarah would be emptied of any sense. The fact that such phenomena are devoid of their constitutive content when cut off from the system of relations of which they are a part is what Nāgārjuna means by "absence of essence" or simply "emptiness" (*niḥsavbhāva* or *śūnyatā*).

In Nāgārjuna's verses one and three quoted above, "that which has been traversed" is the origin (*apādāna*), "that which is being traversed" is the locus (*adhikaraṇa*), and "that which is not yet traversed" is the goal (*sampradāna*). He then tries to connect the motion to any one of the three. Obviously, the *present* motion cannot be located in the origin or the goal, because these are in the past and future respectively. Yet, the origin is not the origin *of* any motion if one attempts to consider it in isolation from the motion due to which it is an origin. Technically, the locus (*adhikaraṇa*) is by definition the locus of the action, and yet "a current locus" cannot be the locus of a motion that never began any more than it can be a locus of a motion that is going nowhere. Nāgārjuna, of course, puts the matter in starker terms. He expresses where the goer has come from as *gata* (past passive participle of √*gam* "to go" – namely, "that which has already been gone over"). Where the goer is headed is expressed as *agata* (the negative of *gata*, but here implying "that which has not (yet) been gone over"). Apart from *gata* and *agata* (*a* and *not-a*) there is no third possibility wherein we might locate the present motion. The problem then boils down to the question of how one verb can discharge a function toward a multiplicity of verbal auxiliaries.

Nāgārjuna moves on to the relationship between the locus of the action, the action itself, and its agent:

5   When there is a going for [i.e., connected to] what is being traversed, there are two goings that have been concluded. There is this going here, and one by means of which there is something being traversed.
6   When two goings are concluded, it would follow that there are two goers because without a goer, going is not possible.

In these two verses, Nāgārjuna puts us on the second horn of the dilemma. In the previous verses, there were not enough "goings" to account for all of the verbal auxiliaries. In verses five and six, he posits an additional 'going' to make up for the lack. The result is, of course, an explosion of such posited entities because any additional action would require an additional set of its auxiliaries. The problem here is actually the opposite of that of the first verse: namely, it is impossible for multiple, mutually contradictory auxiliaries to produce a single coherent action.

Nāgārjuna's argument in this chapter appears to run counter to common sense simply because we do not usually take these verbal components to exist in the way that his arguments require us to. While it makes sense that "what is being traversed, apart from what has been traversed and what has not yet been traversed, is not being traversed," we nevertheless also believe that Interstate 95 on which I am currently travelling *does* exist independently of New York and Boston. Similarly, we believe that a single agent *is* capable of discharging two functions – providing motion and defining the space that is traversed.

As Bhattacharya (1980: 88) points out, the seventh-century commentator Candrakīrti was aware of this objection and explicitly invokes grammatical theory to answer it.

> [Opponent:] Now it may be said: When this Devadatta, standing, speaks and sees, we observe that one [agent] performs more than one action; similarly, there will be two actions in one agent of motion.
>
> It is not so. For the agent is a power, not a substance. And, since action is diversified, it is surely established that the power, which is the means to bring it about, is diversified as well. Indeed, one does not become a speaker by the action of standing! If you say: "The substance is one," let it be so; but the agent is not a substance. What is it then? It is a power. And this power diversifies itself, indeed. Furthermore, it is not seen that someone, occupying a particular space, be the agent of two similar actions. Consequently, there are not two motions for one agent of motion.

In the sentence in which Sarah goes from New York to Boston on Interstate 95, Sarah may be the agent, and New York may be the origin, etc. but that does not mean that "agent" is identical to "Sarah," or that "agent" can necessarily be paraphrased by "Sarah" in this sentence, since both Sarah and New York can exist and yet there be no motion. Sarah, New York, and Boston are generally understood to be nouns, but when put in the sentence describing the motion of Sarah from one to the other, the full sense of each of these nouns can only be understood via the set of relations dictated by the verb. Put another way, the terms "agent" and "origin" carry with them a prepositional quality insofar as the agent must be the agent *of something* to be an agent at all and the origin must be the origin *of something* in order to be an origin. In a strong sense, each of the *kārakas* is necessarily relational. Nāgārjuna highlights this fact as well as the fact that he is only interested in the *kāraka* qua *kāraka* (and not as substance) by introducing each through applying different suffixes and case endings to the same verb √*gam*. Thus, he indicates the agent by adding the agentive ending "-*tṛ*" to the root and indicates the spatio-temporal locus (*adhikaraṇa*) by adding present passive participial affixes to the same root, etc. The opponent's objection in Candrakīrti's commentary, as in Nāgārjuna's verse two, displays a subtle shift in interpretation. The opponent is willing to treat the origin and the goal as *kārakas* vis-à-vis present traversing, yet in maintaining that what is currently being traversed is being traversed (because motion is seen there), the opponent has shifted to a substantial view of the substratum of going.

Candrakīrti correctly points out that the sleight of hand belongs to the opponent, and not Nāgārjuna. The more immediate inspiration for Candrakīrti's refutation, however, probably comes from Bhartṛhari, who argues that a *kāraka* is "the power that a thing has to bring an action to accomplishment" (Bhattacharya 1980: 89, n. 27). According to this grammatical tradition, then, *kārakas* cannot be conflated with the substances that instantiate them, for the reason stated above that Sarah, New York, etc. (the substances mentioned in the above

sentence) may all be present and yet there might still be no going. Alternately, according to Patañjali if a substance were identical to the *kāraka* it instantiates, then it could only act in this capacity toward one *kāraka* and could never serve in the capacity of another. In other words, if Boston were identical with "destination," I might be able to arrive in Boston but could never leave it – as then it would become an "origin." It is for this reason that Patañjali declares *kāraka*s to be qualities, not substances (Bhattacharya 1980: 89, n. 30). Therefore, the *kārakas* must remain interdependent, reciprocally determined verbal components rather than independent substances brought into a relation by an action.

While the assertion that a single action such as "the goer goes" would require two agents sounds far-fetched, Bhattacharya (1980: 90) points out that such a theory actually exists in Patañjali's *Mahābhāṣya*. In a discussion over the sentences "*āsana āste*" and *"śayana śete"* ("… is sitting on a seat," and "… is lying on a bed" respectively) Patañjali claims that,

> [T]here are actually two actions and two agents involved, and that the affix -*ana*- which occurs after the root denoting the action of sitting (*ās-*) or that of lying (*śī-*) refers to all times (*sarvakālaś ca pratyayaḥ*), while that of -*te* which occurs after the root denoting the action of sitting or that of lying refers to the present alone (*vartamānakālaś ca pratyayaḥ*) … In the case of *gamyamānaṃ gamyate*, however, no such solution is available. It is because of the action of the agent that a road … is designated as "being traveled" (*gamyamāna*); then, another action is attributed to this road, its locus (*adhikaraṇa*), when it is said: "[The road] that is being traveled is being traveled" (*gamyamānaṃ gamyate*). There are here two similar actions, but both refer to the present time, and there is only one agent. Hence the paradox.
>
> (Bhattacharya 1980: 90)

It is precisely this apparent paradox that Nāgārjuna is after. If he can get his audience to examine the *kārakā qua kārakā* (and not to treat them as substances) then he is in a position to inquire into the relationships between them. Are they identical? Are they different? If *kāraka A* arises will it still be related to *kāraka B*? For each relationship examined, Nāgārjuna arrives at a contradiction arising from either an entailed absence of a verbal auxiliary or from an unwarranted duplication of an auxiliary. The solution to the apparent paradox, of course, lies in the manner of posing the question that presumes a given *kāraka* to exist independently of the other *kārakā* to which it is related. The collection of *kārakas* is internally related in the same manner as father and son or the pieces in a chess game. A son has no meaning apart from reference to his parents, just as a rook is only a rook by virtue of its distinction from the knight, pawn, queen, etc. Severed from the system of distinctions, the guy is emptied of "son-ness" just as the piece of plastic is emptied of its identity of being a rook. Similarly, the *kārakas* are components of a verb – if we reify any one of them at the expense of the others it cannot discharge its function in signifying action. The reader is left with a choice: either accept that no *kāraka* can exist independently or accept the paradox.

It is one thing to claim that no verbal auxiliary can exist independently, but how does this statement establish the Madhyamaka thesis that *all things* are empty of their own nature (*svabhāva-śūnyatā*)? The crucial point here lies in what kinds of things populate Nāgārjuna's world, and how the things so described in his treatises differ from the commonsense understanding of things. A common procedure that Nāgārjuna employs in his arguments is to treat nouns as verbal derivatives so that he can examine the relationships between the *kārakā* thus derived. Chapter 2 is typical: instead of writing about New York, the New York

Throughway, and Boston or about Sarah and her trip, he writes about *gata*, *gamyamāna*, *agata*, and *gantṛ* (goer).

But does Nāgārjuna's critique only apply to language? One might object that if I remove the rook from the chess game, the plastic item does not thereby vanish from my hand. There have been a number of Nāgārjuna scholars who have argued that his purpose in constructing the paradoxes of the *Fundamental Verses* is to force the reader to abandon either logical thought or language itself, in order to then (somehow) embrace some kind of nonlinguistic or nonconceptual absolute. This interpretation is possible, given that the Perfection of Wisdom tradition that Nāgārjuna champions contains a thread that asserts the fundamental absence of things, because they are name-only (*nāmadheya-mātra*; see Karashima 2011: 45, n. 42). In the *Perfection of Wisdom in 8,000 Lines*, Subhūti does not see any bodhisattvas because they are but mere words. However, the real question is the extent to which we can really do without the words or concepts with which Nāgārjuna constructs his paradoxes. In other words, simply abandoning words will not solve the problem, and saying that Nāgārjuna is playing with words is too easy a dismissal. Adapting the language of Saul Kripke a bit, is there "any possible world" in which going does *not* entail that which is traversed? Is there any possible world we can imagine in which going does not entail origin and destination? If not, then we should acknowledge that there is a kind of necessity in the way Nāgārjuna has set up the problem that is intrinsic not only to language but to thought itself.

In casting his analysis in the manner that he does, Nāgārjuna employs verbs and verbal derivatives where we might normally use nouns. The theory that all nouns can be derived from verbal roots is quite old in Sanskrit grammatical theory and was advocated by Śākaṭāyana and Yāska, both predecessors of Pāṇini (Macdonell 1900: 298). Although Pāṇini himself did not hold to this view, it was held by grammarians even as late as Bhartṛhari (fifth century). In his *Vākyapadīya*, Bhartṛhari points out that nouns are merely verbs with the sequence suppressed.[7] It is likely, therefore, that Nāgārjuna's audience would have been familiar with the theory and that his transposition of nouns into their verbal components would not have seemed particularly strange.

In translating nouns into sets of interrelated verbal auxiliaries, we end up with a set of objects that, on the one hand, are more one-dimensional than those we commonly think of. We generally think of things as substances in which a range of properties are instantiated. Nāgārjuna's objects can have no properties other than the one that defines them. By the same token, these same phenomena are far more interdependent (and radically so) than the multi-propertied substances we commonly think of. Jan Westerhoff (2009: 137–38) has eloquently characterized Nāgārjuna's treatment as foregrounding "thin individuals" at the expense of the "thick individuals" we are accustomed to thinking about.

> [C]onsider the case of some object that is green, cubical and heavy. When referring to such an object in language, we will generally form the nominalization of one of the predicates denoting its properties, which we then take to denote the object which instantiates the other two properties. Calling the object a "green heavy cube," we have turned the predicate *cubical* into the common noun *cube*, of which *green* and *heavy* are then predicated. … Let us call the property we turned into an individual by nominalizing the predicate the *constitutive property*, since it brings about or constitutes the individual referred to (in our example this is *being cubical*) … and call the other two *instantiated properties*, since they are instantiated by the individual thus constituted (*being green, being heavy*) … In the example of the green heavy cube we are dealing with a case

where constitutive and instantiated *properties* are distinct; the cube is therefore a *thick individual*. A *thin individual*, on the other hand, is an object whose only instantiated properties are its constitutive property or properties entailed by its constitutive property … Nāgārjuna argues that in the case of thin individuals the familiar analysis in terms of objects instantiating properties no longer works.

As stated above, the property of "goer" cannot be conflated with any particular substance, since the word communicates something quite different from any substance, nor as a thin individual can the nominalized property instantiate other properties. Its auxiliaries are in fact constitutive properties of the thin individual insofar as we cannot think, for instance, "goer" without also thinking "that which is being gone over," etc.

Of course, not all of Nāgārjuna's arguments are structured around the verbal auxiliaries. But once we understand that Nāgārjuna's point in using the *kārakas* was to analyze a system of internal relations, we can see that his other arguments are similarly formulated. Thus his investigation of *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra*, or karma and its fruit, as well as his examples (in the *Vigrahavyāvartanī*) of father and son, or lamp and illumination, can also be demonstrated to be internal relations.

We are now in a position to evaluate the comparisons that are often made between Nāgārjuna's work and that of a number of more recent philosophers. What the thinkers who are often compared to Nāgārjuna have in common is that one way or another they either engage in a robust critique of atomism (Wittgenstein and Whitehead both wrote against Russell's logical atomism) or explore structures of meaning in which the value of any point in the structure is solely a function of its relations to other points. To the extent that we may credit Ferdinand de Saussure with the founding of the "Structuralism" that subsequent structuralists and post-structuralists either fully or partially imbibe, we can say that it is possible that the structure of language that Saussure points to in his *Course in General Linguistics* was inspired by precisely the same grammatical theory that inspired Nāgārjuna's philosophy of emptiness. Saussure wrote his doctoral thesis (Saussure 1881) on the use of the genitive absolute in Sanskrit, and in it he demonstrates that he is quite familiar with the idea of the *kārakas* through Pāṇinī. It is, however, in the notes compiled after his death, the *Course in General Linguistics*, that we find a description of the structure of language that bears a number of affinities to Nāgārjuna's arguments. Granted, at the time Saussure was giving those lectures, he was no longer talking exclusively about Sanskrit grammar, but he seems to have developed his understanding of the internal relations between meanings through reflection on the way verbs function. To give an example:

Inflection offers some particularly striking examples. Distinctions of time, which are so familiar to us, are unknown in certain languages. … Instead of pre-existing ideas … we find in all the foregoing examples values emanating from the system. When they are said to correspond to concepts, it is understood that the concepts are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system. Their most precise characteristic is being what the others are not.

(Saussure 1959: 116–17)

In other words, the similarities that motivate scholars to compare Nāgārjuna to Derrida in particular may be due to the strong historical possibility that Nāgārjuna was inspired by exactly the same grammatical theory that inspired Saussure and by extension Derrida. As

for the comparisons between Nāgārjuna and Wittgenstein and Whitehead, while it is difficult to draw historical connections, there does appear to be a natural affinity between these thinkers to the extent that both Wittgenstein and Whitehead are reacting against the atomism of Russell in exactly the same way that Nāgārjuna was responding to the atomism of the Sarvāstivādins. One suspects that there are only so many ways to refute atomism, and it should really come as no surprise to find two completely separate cultures arriving at generally similar solutions.

TWO TRUTHS

Nāgārjuna's arguments for things' overall lack of essence were to have profound implications for, if not impact upon, the Buddhist doctrine of the "two truths." The two truths were originally articulated to distinguish between (what for Buddhists are) merely nominally existent entities such as the self or the person and really existing entities such as dharmas or the great elements (air, earth, fire, water, and space). Under the classical view one could, theoretically at least, abandon the false idea of the self and focus exclusively on what really *does* exist: dharmas. By having his analysis end not with any substance but with a relationship, Nāgārjuna requires his reader to rethink the relation between the two truths. No longer can one simply abandon the conventional to embrace the transcendent since, as Nāgārjuna states in the *Fundamental Verses*,

> The ultimate is not taught without depending upon the conventional;
> One will not attain nirvana without having understood the ultimate.
>
> (Newland and Tillemans, 2010: 7)

For Nāgārjuna to be consistent, the conventional cannot be abandoned, nor can the ultimate be embraced to the exclusion of the conventional since neither has meaning apart from the other. Both the ultimate and the conventional are devoid of essential nature. This does not mean, of course, that one should cease trying to understand the ultimate. Rather, the *only place to look for it* is within the relationships that make up the conventional. Nāgārjuna's thought does not seek to erase the worldly, but rather to find the ultimate seamlessly ensconced within it. Or, as Nāgārjuna famously asserts, between nirvana and saṃsāra there is not the slightest bit of difference (*MMK* 25.20). Needless to say, assertions such as these, along with the arguments that led to them, made writing treatises on the two truths into something of a cottage industry in China and Tibet – the intricacies of which, unfortunately, fall well beyond the scope of the present essay.

DEVELOPMENT OF NĀGĀRJUNA'S PHILOSOPHICAL THOUGHT

The doctrine of emptiness is certainly the centerpiece of Nāgārjuna's philosophy. This does not, however, mean that he did not entertain other ideas or that his thought did not evolve. Whether or exactly how it evolved and when is a problem that places us right back into the set of problems with which we began: namely the issues of textual authenticity and biography. A core issue in determining the development of Nāgārjuna's thought is the question of whether or not the *Jeweled Garland* is authentic. The *Jeweled Garland* differs stylistically from the logical treatises and displays a few doctrinal features that are not

present in earlier works. If it is treated as authentic, this text provides us with a kind of bridge between the doctrine of emptiness developed in the *Fundamental Verses* and many of the key doctrines of later Mahāyāna that appear in some of the lesser-known treatises attributed to Nāgārjuna. This is because the latter works happen to be both metrically and doctrinally closer to the *Jeweled Garland* than to the *Fundamental Verses*. How far Nāgārjuna developed these ideas, then, will largely be a function of how many of these sources one is willing to take as authentic.

DHARMADHĀTU AND *DHARMAKĀYA*

There are essentially two doctrines appearing in the *Jeweled Garland* but not in the *Fundamental Verses*: the idea of *dharmakāya* or *dharmadhātu* and the doctrine of Mind. While the *Fundamental Verses* is reticent to say anything positive about emptiness, much less about the nature of the Buddha, we get a different and decidedly less apophatic presentation of the Buddha in the *Jeweled Garland* and in some of the other hymns ascribed to Nāgārjuna. In these works we begin to see the emergence of an absolute omnipresent principle that appears to be not too far removed from the doctrine of the *tathāgatagarbha*, or "womb of the Buddha" (see the chapter by Duckworth in this volume). Thus if we begin with the *Jeweled Garland,* we find a clear presentation of the form body (*rūpakāya*) and the dharma body (*dharmakāya*) as the results of two different sets of spiritual practices.

> 3.12 The Form Body of a Buddha
> Arises from the collections of merit.
> The Truth Body in brief, O King,
> Arises from the collections of wisdom.
>
> (Hopkins 1998: 122)

The dharma body of a buddha here cannot be equated with the specific "buddha dharmas" (*aveṇikabuddhadharmā*, a buddha's exalted qualities) since these dharmas include the perfection of his physical body and thus could not be contrasted with the form body. Here, both a buddha's form and dharma bodies are produced as a result of two different kinds of spiritual practice. His dharma body is here a distinct thing with its unique causes.

While I do not think it is necessary to do so, we might still read the *Jeweled Garland'*s reference to the *dharmakāya* as Paul Harrison (1992: 58) urges us to, as "the body of teachings." Under this reading, a buddha's physical body is the result of his accumulation of merit, and his collection of teachings is due to his accumulation of wisdom. It is more difficult to maintain this reading, however, when we turn to the *Hymn to the Incomparable*. The latter is close to the *Jeweled Garland* in style and is almost metrically identical – an indication that it may well be by the same author as the *Jeweled Garland*. The hymn presents us with a picture of the Buddha that is remarkably docetic – strikingly similar in many ways to the *Lokānuvartanasūtra* of the *Lokottaravādin* Mahāsaṃghikas. And like the latter sūtra, at one point in the hymn, we find the following statements:

> Your body made out of dharma is eternal, imperishable, auspicious, victorious.
> But, for the sake of the people who need to be trained, [entering into the final] cessation (*nirvṛti*) has been shown by you.
>
> (Mitrikeski 2009: 149)

Refracted through a docetic lens, the Buddha's two bodies can only be interpreted as the apparent body (i.e., the one that appears to suffer, die, etc.) and the real body made of dharma that is above any possible change. To argue that this "dharma" should be plural or should in some way refer to Buddhist teachings runs into the fact that the verse says that the Buddha shows this body to be "extinguished" (*nivṛti*). While there are certainly Mahāyāna texts that discuss the "extinction of the dharma," this extinction is usually rendered by *vipralopa*, never as far as I am aware, by *nivṛti*, whereas the latter is commonly used to refer to the death of a monk.[8] This dharma-made body (*kāya dharmamayo*) is juxtaposed against the *dharmadhātu* of the preceding verse – the "element" (or "relic") of dharma that, like emptiness itself, admits no differentiation. As David Ruegg (1981: 31) has pointed out, this identification of emptiness with an eternally existing body of the Buddha is decidedly "cataphatic" and indeed appears to be moving in the direction of the *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine as represented in the *Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā* (*Śrīmālādevī-siṃhanāda Sūtra*) – although it must be stressed that the term is not actually used here, nor does the *Hymn to the Incomparable* employ the idea of the dharma body of the Buddha to argue for the potential buddhahood of anybody but the Buddha himself.

MIND

The doctrine of mind that appears in the *Jeweled Garland* can be found near the end of the first chapter.

> 93. Earth, water, fire, wind,
> Long, short, subtle, and coarse,
> As well as virtue (*dge*) and so forth are said by the Subduer
> To be ceased in consciousness [of reality].
>
> (Hopkins 1998: 107)

The first verse quoted above rounds out a group of arguments refuting the possibility that any of the five elements (*mahābhūta*) could exist independently or substantially. These seem to refer back to arguments made in the *Fundamental Verses* such as the arguments about the relation between fire and fuel (*Garland*, vv. 86–87 = *Verses*, chap. 10) and the relation between an element and its characteristic (*Garland*, v. 90 = *Verses*, chap. 6). The *Jeweled Garland* passage differs in that it reveals the point of the dialectic procedure to be the cessation of each of the discussed terms "in consciousness" – a pretty clear reference to the *Kevaddha Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. In this discourse, a monk asks all of the gods, "Where do the four elements … cease without remainder?" None of the gods have an answer to this question, and so he turns to the Buddha. The Buddha responds that the question is not properly worded. Instead, one should ask:

> Where do earth, water, fire and air no footing find? Where are long and short, small and great, fair and foul – Where are "name and form" wholly destroyed?

The answer is:

> Where consciousness is signless, boundless, all luminous. That's where earth, water, fire, and air find no footing. There both long and short, subtle and coarse, fair and foul

(*subhāsubha*). There ''name and form'' are wholly destroyed. With the cessation of consciousness this is all destroyed.

<div align="right">(Walshe 1995: 179–80)</div>

The *Jeweled Garland* discussion is echoed in the 34th verse of the *Sixty Verses on Reasoning* (*Yuktiṣāṣṭikā*):

Such things spoken of as the great elements (*mahābhūta*) are absorbed [or contained] in consciousness. They are dissolved by understanding them. Certainly they are falsely imagined!

<div align="right">(Lindtner 1990: 110–11)</div>

The latter verse, of course, became a kind of proof text for the so-called "Yogācāra-Madhyamaka synthesis" promulgated by Śāntarakṣita in his *Adornment of the Madhyamaka* (the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*), insofar as it asserts that all external entities are a function of the mind while not going so far as to advocate the real existence of the mind itself. Clearly the doctrine of mind here is quite independent of Yogācāra speculations since it is grounded in the *Kevaddha Sutta*.

   Once we notice these passages that argue for the mental construction of external objects, similar passages in other works come to light. For example, we may want to reconsider the *Twenty Verses on the Mahāyāna* (the *Mahāyāna-viṃśatikā*) as an authentic text of Nāgārjuna, since it argues the emptiness of phenomena with a strong role for the constructing mind. By the same token, the *Hymn on the Dharma Element* (the *Dharmadhātu-stava*) picks up the topic of the *dharmadhātu* as an unchanging entity which (echoing the mind in the "finger snap" *sutta* of the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* [I.12ff]) is nirvana when clear (its natural state) but is the cause of saṃsāra when clouded by defilements. There are two results of this. On the one hand, the *dharmadhātu* is represented as the potential for awakening in all creatures.

27 Just as a child in the belly of a pregnant woman
exists but is not seen,
just so, covered by afflictions,
dharmadhātu also is not seen.

<div align="right">(Mitrikeski 2008: 197)</div>

The second result is that the *dharmadhātu* becomes associated with mind itself. This depiction of the *dharmadhātu* is, of course, quite close to the *tathāgatagarbha* of the *Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā* and *Explanation of the Jeweled Lineage* (*Ratnagotra-vibhāga*), which works rather nicely with the emerging picture of Buddhist life in Andhra Pradesh around the beginning of the third century CE. If I am correct that the *Jeweled Garland* was written after the *Fundamental Verses* in Andhra in the last decade of the second century CE, and if, as Drasko Mitrikeski has argued, the *Hymn to the Incomparable* and *the Hymn to the Dharma Element* were written by Nāgārjuna after the *Jeweled Garland* in the same region, then we can surmise that Nāgārjuna's thought began developing in the direction of (but not exactly arriving at) *tathāgatagārbha* ideas later in his career.

   This portrait of Nāgārjuna's life and thought, especially that of his later career, will necessarily have to be left open-ended. So much depends on which texts are determined to be authentic and the relative chronology between the works so determined. Sadly, since the

issue of authenticity relies (within limits) on the personal predilection of the scholar working on the problem, there will probably never be a "final answer." to the issue of Nāgārjuna's later career.

NOTES

1   A new translation and far more extensive treatment of all of the hymns ascribed to Nāgārjuna has been done by Mitrikeski (2008).

2   Of course, even if we assume that the opening verses of the *Root Verses* are not a quotation from the *Perfection of Wisdom in 25,000 Lines*, David Ruegg (1981: 6) has correctly pointed out that it is difficult to read *Root Verses* 13.8 except through the lens of the *Kāśyapaparivarta*.

3   Some of his criteria are far from definitive, e.g., his assertion that the *Akutobhayā* is not authentic because it quotes from Āryadeva (and a teacher would never quote from a student). While Lintner may be correct, his reasoning assumes that Āryadeva was in fact the direct disciple of Nāgārjuna and that the two did not deviate from our image of the ideal behavior of teacher and disciple. Or that the **Upāyahṛdāya* is spurious since it is "unlikely that Nāgārjuna, whose predilection for arguing merely by way of *prasaṅga* is well-known, should recommend conventional rules of debate in order to vindicate the Dharma." Nāgārjuna does use a standard syllogistic form, if somewhat sporadically, and was recognized to have done so. On this, see Walser (1998). For Lindtner's book in general, see the excellent review by Williams (1984).

4   Nāgārjuna's auto-commentary on the *Dispeller of Disputes* verses 49 and 50 should be read against the background of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* commentary on the *agnicayana* ritual (see especially *ŚB*. 6.1.2.13). Note that the explanation of these verses that is usually offered by modern scholars (e.g., that the father is only a father by virtue of the birth of the son) is *not* the explanation that Nāgārjuna in fact gives. Nāgārjuna's example of the son producing the father is something that he assumes the (brahmanical) opponent *already* believes. The theme of Agni producing his father, Prajāpati, does not appear in any commentary on the *agnicayana* other than that of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.

There is also a rather obscure (or fragmentary) Vedic reference surviving in Tibetan accounts of Nāgārjuna's death. Wallesser (1979 reprint: 5) mentions that Nāgārjuna's life ends due to the god Brahmā (in the guise of a brahmin) cutting off his head with a piece of *kuśa* grass. This seems to relate to the method of ritual slaughter used in the *agnicayana* in which the *adhvaryu* priest "cuts off the heads by holding a blade of Darbha grass between the throat and the knife." [Ranade (1978: 450); = *Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra* 16.1.18.]

5   My deepest thanks to Jan Westerhoff for his insightful comments on this section.

6   This term comes from Fodor and Lepore (1992). They propose two versions of anatomism, a strong variety and a weak one. On page 28, they state that strong anatomism means that, "There are other propositions such that you can't believe *P* unless you believe them." The weak version means that, "You can't believe *P* unless there are other propositions that you believe." As we shall see farther on, Nāgārjuna's version of anatomism is the strong variety.

7   "Verbs express things in that condition (that is, as having sequence). Nouns, on the other hand, operate as though suppressing this sequence" (Bhartṛhari 1974: 21).

8   Yijing commonly uses the transliteration *bōrěníhuan* 若般泥洹 (*parinirvāṇa* = *parinivṛti*?) as a euphemism for the death of a monk. See, e.g., *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* 1425, 479b23–24.

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VASUBANDHU
Constructing a Buddhist Mainstream

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Jonathan C. Gold

INTRODUCTION

The fourth- or fifth-century Indian scholar Vasubandhu is among the best-known and most influential of Buddhist philosophers, but he is also extremely controversial and difficult to pin down. His scholarship is hounded on the one side by issues of dating and attribution, and on the other side by controversies over how to characterize his mature, Yogācāra philosophy (Frauwallner 1951, Jaini 1958, Schmithausen 1967, Skilling 2000, Kritzer 2003, Gold 2011). This set of mainly philological problems has tended to slow the development of interpretive, philosophical studies of Vasubandhu's works. If we compare the number of books and articles on the philosophy of Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250) to those on Vasubandhu, for instance, one would think that the importance of the latter paled in comparison to that of the former. But that is by no means the case.

Just to dramatize the point, we might glance at the structure of the "presentation of tenets" (*grub mtha'*), doxographic literature according to which Tibetan scholastic manuals teach basic Buddhist philosophy to nearly every monk (Hopkins 1996, Dreyfus 2003, Harter 2011). There is a standard, hierarchical, fourfold division of Buddhist doctrinal schools handed down in Tibet, with Madhyamaka, the school of Nāgārjuna, at the top. The other three schools include what Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna) proponents call the two "lesser" (Hīnayāna) or "hearer" (Śrāvakayāna) Schools – Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika – as well as the other (ostensibly inferior) Mahāyāna school, the Yogācāra (called *sems tsam*, Skt. *cittamātra* ["mind only"] in Tibet). There is a great deal to say about this hierarchical structure, but here let us just notice that for Tibetans, these four schools make up Buddhist philosophy.

Table 31.1 Standard Tibetan Buddhist doxographic classification (*grub mtha'*)

Madhyamaka	
	Mahāyāna
Yogācāra (Cittamātra)	
Sautrāntika	
	Hīnayāna/Śrāvakayāna
Vaibhāṣika	

So, what do the Tibetans use as their main source to learn about Vaibhāṣika views? Vasubandhu's master work of metaphysics (*abhidharma*), the *Commentary on the Treasury of Abhidharma* (*Abhidharmakośa-bhāṣya*). What do they use for Sautrāntikā? Vasubandhu's *Commentary* again. This one work in fact lays out both positions in counterpoint, pitting them, and many other Buddhist and non-Buddhist views, against one another. So that's half. How about for the ostensibly lower Great Vehicle school, the Yogācāra? Well, many of the most important Yogācāra sources for Tibetans are the treatises of Maitreya and Asaṅga (ca. fourth century), but equally important are the works, once again, of Vasubandhu, especially his *Twenty Verses* (*Viṃśatikā*) and *Thirty Verses* (*Triṃśikā*). So, while Nāgārjuna is relied upon as the exponent for the highest philosophical view, Vasubandhu is relied upon for virtually *everything else*. His significance should not be in question.

Yet Vasubandhu's importance as a representative of so many philosophical schools is actually one of the reasons that his identity as a philosopher is *not* well established. He is depicted in traditional biographies as a brilliant scholar who changed his alliances twice in his life – the first change driven by his own search for satisfying answers to philosophical problems in traditional Abhidharma, the second as a result of a conversion experience brought on by works sent to him by his elder brother, Asaṅga (Takakusu 1904). As a consequence of these narratives and the diversity of scholastic identities that his works are taken to represent, we generally read not of the views of Vasubandhu, but of the separate tenets of each of the schools in which he participated – or, we read of his particular view as presented in a particular text. While some scholars have sought continuity across Vasubandhu's works, the majority follows Buddhist tradition in reading works representing different doctrinal schools separately (notable exceptions are Schmithausen 1967, Hirakawa 1973, and Kritzer 2003, 2005).

There is prudence in the doxographic approach, which distinguishes texts and views into separate scholastic, doctrinal categories. Indian and Tibetan Buddhist scholars conceived of, named, and wrote about the views of a number of distinct schools. So to ignore them would be to ignore a major Buddhist scholastic preoccupation. Doxography also provides a useful scaffold for building new knowledge in a complex field. It serves that purpose for modern scholars just as it has for young monks for centuries.

Yet the scaffold must be dismantled in order for the true edifice to emerge. This is especially true if we are to make sense of Vasubandhu as a philosopher. His works stand out for their refusal of the traditional classificatory divisions. For the vast majority of Indian Buddhist authors, although their texts may vary in style and approach, we do not find works that disavow the most general beliefs of their given scholastic identities. We do not find Nāgārjuna arguing, even on occasion, for a Śrāvaka interpretation of the nature of *dharmas*, and we do not find Saṃghabhadra (ca. fourth–fifth century), Vasubandhu's great Vaibhāṣika opponent, allowing that the Yogācārins may sometimes have a good point when they critique his tradition. Vasubandhu's works, on the other hand, show a tremendous diversity of viewpoints: The root verses of the *Treasury of Abhidharma* summarize the Vaibhāṣika position, while its commentary critiques that very position from many perspectives, especially that of the Sautrāntika. His subsequent Abhidharma works weave Yogācāra elements into these discussions as well. Eventually Vasubandhu seems to have switched entirely from Śrāvakayāna to Mahāyāna. He wrote numerous commentaries on Yogācāra works. He composed a major work on scriptural interpretation, which defends the validity of the Mahāyāna Sūtras. And he authored a few concise but influential independent works that summarize a Yogācāra perspective. If there is one central identity here, it is Yogācāra

– at least, that does seem to be where Vasubandhu ends up. Yet, as has been noted before, and as I will argue further here, his Yogācāra works do not entirely abandon his earlier perspectives. A modest reading should acknowledge that there is no clean classificatory category for many of these works, and doubly so for the author himself.

In what follows, therefore, I will analyze several brief passages from Vasubandhu's works that, although they appear in texts representing distinct philosophical schools, display a coherent, unified approach to Buddhist scriptures and doctrines. My view is that Vasubandhu's philosophical work drew together and synthesized the reigning doctrinal systems of his day. Even as an advocate of Yogācāra, he did not simply accept the doctrines that had been handed down to him. He adopted what he took to be the successes of the Yogācāra, and he reformed them in a way that allowed them to merge with Madhyamaka and Śrāvaka elements. This may make him appear to be a uniquely ecumenical Mahāyānist. Yet his perspective fits elegantly with the approach taken by the epistemological traditions of Dignāga (ca. 480–540) and Dharmakīrti (ca. seventh century). To me, this is evidence that Vasubandhu's synthesis helped to establish a broad, solid intellectual foundation upon which Indian Buddhist philosophy would stand for the next thousand years. (See also Gold 2006, 2007, 2011.)

RATIONALITY AND CAUSALITY IN THE REFUTATION OF THE SELF

In order to characterize Vasubandhu's philosophical identity, let us begin with one of his most important, most influential, and most characteristic arguments, which nonetheless has not received the attention it commands. It is the opening argument of Chapter nine of the *Commentary*, the chapter on the "Refutation of the Self" (on which, see Kapstein 2001, Duerlinger 2003, Siderits 2003, Goodman 2009, and Gold 2011). In it Vasubandhu gives a very concise *refutation of the self* – it is the title argument, and we may say that the rest of the chapter is dedicated to defending it. It probably does not need to be emphasized just how important the doctrine of no-self (*anātman*) is for a great Buddhist philosopher. Vasubandhu, however, does not take its importance for granted. He precedes his argument with the statement that without understanding no-self it is impossible to achieve liberation, and that this is why only Buddhists, who reject the self, will be liberated. So, this is the argument that establishes (1) Buddhism's superiority to, and distinctiveness from, non-Buddhist systems, as well as (2) Buddhism's sole claim to the potential for liberation – its soteriological exclusivism:

> And how is this to be understood, that the word "self" indicates only the continuum of aggregates, and does not apply elsewhere? Because of the nonexistence of perception or inference. For where there are entities (*dharma*), their perception is observed, and not elsewhere. Such is the case for the six sensory objects (*viṣaya*) and the mind. And there is an inference for the five sensory organs. Here the inference is that with a cause in place, when another cause does not exist, no result is seen, and when it does exist it comes about again, as with a sprout. Or, with the cause in place that consists in the sensory object come into appearance and mental effort, no grasping of a sensory object is seen for blind or deaf, etc. people whereas it is for people who are not blind or deaf, etc. Thus, just there, it is determined (*niścaya*) that there is the existence and

nonexistence of another cause. And that other cause is the sensory organ–that's the inference. And no such inference exists for the self, so there is no self.

<div align="right">(AKBh 461.2–20)</div>

The basic argument of this passage is that the continuum of aggregates (the five *skandhas*) can be admitted, but the self cannot, because the aggregates can be *proven* by appeal to perception and inference, whereas the self cannot. There is a minor conceptual sleight of hand here, since Vasubandhu actually proves the twelve spheres (*āyatana*), not the five aggregates (*skandha*). From my perspective this is not a philosophical problem worth complaining about, but it does remind us that the *Commentary* was written for a Buddhist scholastic audience, whose members could easily translate between the categories of aggregates and spheres. The first chapter of the *Commentary* did this work of correlating the two classifications as presented in Table 13.2.

In the argument, Vasubandhu distinguishes two kinds of legitimately known entities: those known by perception, and those known by inference. The seven entities known by perception are the five sensory objects (visual objects, sounds, smells, tastes, and tangibles), as well as mental objects, and the mind. The inference, then, is intended to prove the reality of the five remaining spheres, which are the five sensory organs. Yet the frame is important to keep in mind. The ultimate purpose of the inference adduced is not so much to prove the reality of the sensory organs as it is to display what a proper inference looks like, so that it may be made evident that no inference for the self is forthcoming. The inference grounds the reality of the sensory organs, but serves more importantly as an epistemic argument for no-self.

The inference itself is fairly simple. When you have someone who wants to see something, and that thing is directly perceptible, one of two things can happen. If she has

Table 31.2 Comparison of aggregates and spheres from *Commentary*, I.14–16

Aggregates (*skandha*)	Spheres (*āyatana*)
	Eye
	Visual object
	Ear
	Sound
	Nose
Form	Smell
	Tongue
	Taste
	Body
	Tactile
Consciousness	Mind
Feeling	
Ideas	Mental object
Dispositions	

working eyes, she sees it. If she is blind, she does not. The distinction here is between two situations, between which only one thing may be assumed to have changed: the presence of the working sensory eye organ (by which Vasubandhu means not the eyeball, which many blind people have, but rather the "subtle" eye that is understood to take in the visual form and make it available to consciousness). Keeping everything else constant, a change in that one variable changes the target outcome. This is a paradigmatic inference for Vasubandhu. He says it is what is missing for the self, and it is precisely because such an inference is missing that we can say, confidently, that *there is* no self. This inference, therefore, deserves careful scrutiny.

First, notice that, for Vasubandhu, a specific appeal to causality is intrinsic to the notion of "inference" or *anumāna*. Vasubandhu does not often use the term *anumāna* in the *Commentary*, but when he does use it, it always refers to the process of extrapolating a causal series – either predicting results based on causes or, as here, inferring a cause (eye organ) from a result (sight). In one passage Vasubandhu says that when the Buddha has provided a shortened version of the links of dependent origination, one can extrapolate the full series of causes and results by "inference" (*anumāna*; AKBh 134.17). In another passage investigating just how the Buddha comes to know the future, Vasubandhu proposes an argument that the Buddha might be able to foresee future events by "inferring" a causal result in the future based upon his knowledge of how causes have operated in the past and how things stand in the present (AKBh 99.2). Vasubandhu rejects this argument because the Buddha is said to perceive the future directly, not merely to infer it. But the point is that in all of these arguments, inference is what determines causal relationships. And it is only our knowledge of causal relationships, in turn, that can tell us whether unseen, unperceived entities are real. This is why it is necessary for ordinary beings to employ inference, even if the appeal to causal sequences requires us to impose something that is lesser than a Buddha's direct awareness.

The argument against the self, then, is fundamentally a declaration that whatever attempt one makes to prove the reality of the self, it can always be shown that the so-called "self" can be written out of the inference – that is, the causal story. It is possible, Vasubandhu thinks, to provide a causal account of everything perceptible *without* relying upon the conceptual imposition of a self. Across the remainder of this lengthy chapter, then, Vasubandhu rebuffs his opponents' claims that difficult points such as agency, memory, and karmic continuity require an appeal to the causal powers of a self.

So Vasubandhu believes he is capable of refuting every particular claim as to the causal necessity of the self. But what unites these many particular claims into a general claim? What is it about the argument as stated that makes Vasubandhu think it *proves* no-self? What is it about his inferential structure here that makes him think it proves that *there can be* no inference that proves the self? The answer is that, for Vasubandhu, the self is not the kind of thing that can be engaged with the causal flow of entities, and as we have already seen, it is only through its causal capacities that we could *infer* such an imperceptible thing. What is real must be knowable, and what is knowable must be knowable by its causes. Vasubandhu considers it to be a basic tenet of Buddhism – an expression of the Buddha's doctrine of impermanence – that a permanent self would fail this test of reality because it would be, by its nature, disengaged from causality.

What, we may ask, is the basis for Vasubandhu's view? Why is the self necessarily excluded from the flow of causality? And why is it necessary that inferences be rooted in causality? These questions direct us to the core of Vasubandhu's approach to causality. In

contemporary parlance, Vasubandhu's view of causality may be called "manipulationist." Manipulationism is a theory of causal explanation put forward by the philosopher James Woodward, according to which causality is best explained on the model of a kind of hypothetical scientific experiment. What it means to say that one thing causes another is that, with controls in place, if we "manipulate" the cause, we change the value of the result.

Now, notice the structure of Vasubandhu's inference, which is almost a formalization of manipulationist causal explanation: "[T]he inference is that with a cause in place, when another cause does not exist, no result is seen, and when it does exist [the result] comes about again." First, the expression "with a cause in place" sets up the controlled scenario, the backdrop against which we are looking for a relationship between particular causes and results. Next, that relationship is defined by appeal to a manipulation of the cause in question: If you do not have the cause, there is no result; if you do have the cause, the result comes about. This is the basis for discovering an unseen entity.

It is in this framework that Vasubandhu feels comfortable denying the substantial reality of entities that do not change, such as space, a creator God, and centrally, the eternal self. Such entities can be shown *not* to exist because there is no (even hypothetical) scenario in which manipulation of a cause could reveal them to be related to a result. There is no way in which they can be shown to have caused anything, because in every scenario in which they are hypothesized to exist, they exist *unchanged*, entirely as they are. This, then, is Vasubandhu's disproof of the existence of a creator God (as summarized in Gold 2011): If God is the cause of everything, God is *always* the cause of everything – or, if God's nature is to be the cause of everything at time *t*, then God must cause everything at time *t*. There is, consequently, no scenario in which God can be shown to have affected a change in the world, or to have been affected by one. The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the self.

Faced with this criticism, one of the central means by which philosophers in India, like the West, have attempted to explain how eternal beings (gods and souls) may be related to a changing world is by attributing changing *qualities* to unchanging *substances*. Vasubandhu's argument against the (Hindu) Sāṃkhya use of this strategy helps to reveal his strict adherence to the manipulationist causal measure:

> But it is not indeed like change for the Sāṃkhyas.
> And how is change for the Sāṃkhyas?
> Where, possessed by a stable substance, one dharma disappears
>   and another dharma arises.
> And what is the fault here?
> That the dharma-possessor is not known which is stable, but whose
>   dharmas are made to change.
> What about saying that the dharma-possessor is other than the dharmas?
> But the substance itself has a change, simply by becoming
>   possessed of difference (*anyathībhāva*). This is what is illogical.
> What here is illogical?
> "That very thing is both this way and not this way" – such an unprecedented
>   expression of logic!

> (AKBh 159.18–22)

This argument encapsulates for us Vasubandhu's extremely strict view of the inconsistency of stability and change. It is rooted in the simple dictum that one thing cannot be in

opposition to itself. Two opposites cannot logically be said to be the same entity. Consequently, when a thing is said to change, and become its own opposite, it is a mistake to imagine that this change takes place against the backdrop of some stable entity. There is no stable "thing," but only a changing system.

Why, we might ask, is it not acceptable to say that the backdrop remains the same? For Vasubandhu, the reason is that you must make a choice: You must declare whether it is a true part of the "backdrop" that it "possesses" the changing entities in question. For, surely that very *possession* changes – first one thing is possessed, then another. If this changing *possession* is a true aspect of the substance, then the substance changes, vitiating its nature as an unchanging substance. If, conversely, the backdrop does not change, then there is no sense in saying that the backdrop "possesses" one thing or another. The backdrop becomes, by definition, irrelevant to any possible changes that may take place.

This argument displays again how, for Vasubandhu, what is causally irrelevant cannot be said truly to exist. It is evident here that not only change, but in fact all relations to changing things, become impossible for an unchanging entity. The same may be said for the relationship between an unchanging "self" and the changing entities that make us who we are – the twelve spheres, or the five aggregates. In a manipulationist view, it is the stipulation of a controlled backdrop that permits our recognition of the patterns that we describe as causal relations. But that stipulation itself is only a stipulation, and it would be viciously circular to allow the backdrop to be proven by the causal series. The self is disproven by its failure to supply any meaningful causal change. In addition to the self or "person" (*pudgala*), Vasubandhu's *Commentary* appeals again and again to this failure of causal capacity in order to disprove a great number of the entities (*dharma*) affirmed by his Vaibhāṣika opponents. He believes that to assert these entities is to violate the basic Buddhist approach to causality implicit in the Buddha's reduction of the self to the five aggregates ("reduction" in the sense of Siderits 1997).

VASUBANDHU'S VIEW OF KNOWLEDGE FROM BUDDHIST SCRIPTURES

We have seen that in his "Refutation of the Self," Vasubandhu refers to perception and inference – the two traditional Buddhist *pramāṇas*, or means of knowledge – and he says that perception observes one set of objects, that inference determines a second set of objects, and what fails to be found by either does not exist. This epistemic bifurcation of the real world into objects of perception and objects of inference is generally attributed to the first great Buddhist epistemologist, Dignāga. But it is at least implicit in Vasubandhu's argument (without Dignāga's innovative terminology, on which see Arnold 2005: 13–31). Next, we have seen that the inference that proves imperceptible entities is a causal inference, which, as we have also seen, is for Vasubandhu the only kind of inference that a Buddhist should allow as proof of an entity's reality. Thus, two principles often attributed to the second great Buddhist epistemologist Dharmakīrti are also quite prominent in the *Commentary*. The first is that inferences are essentially formalizations of causal stories, and the second is that without establishing causality we cannot establish reality – or, to say the same thing, that causality is the touchstone of the real (without Dharmakīrti's innovative definitions, on which see Dreyfus 1997: 65–67). What this means is that Vasubandhu's view of causality was not only the basis for his masterful interpretation of Buddhist selflessness and its

relation to Abhidharma. It was also, crucially, the foundation for the epistemological traditions that would dominate Indian Buddhism in the centuries to follow.

I mention this connection between Vasubandhu's no-self proof passage and the origins of Buddhist epistemology not only because it allows us to sing praises of his significance once again, but also because it highlights for us that his argument explicating the Buddha's ontological position of no-self is centrally about *knowledge*. As I have said above, it is an *epistemic* argument for no-self. It establishes no-self at the fulcrum between *what it means* that something exists (it means that that thing has causes) and *how we can know* that something exists (we know because we can measure its causes). Given that Vasubandhu's theory of causality, which we have called "manipulationist," is serving *epistemic* goals, it will do us well to expand our understanding of the epistemic implications of a manipulationist view of causality. Once we have understood the epistemological implications of the manipulationist view, we will be ready to trace the connection between Vasubandhu's view of causality and his approach to knowledge gained from Buddhist scriptures. This approach to scriptural knowledge, we will see, is employed in the *Commentary* and theorized in the Yogācāra-influenced *Proper Mode of Exposition*.

On Woodward's manipulationist view, causality is a mode of explanation that describes not laws, but patterns of invariance – what he calls "patterns of counterfactual dependence" (Woodward 2003: 85). Importantly, these are patterns that only become visible when we are looking to solve particular practical problems. Our causal judgments depend crucially on just how we define our intervention, or manipulation, and on what we take to be the relevant background context against which we are willing to describe a cause. Woodward allows that the contextual framing of the causal scenario in this way introduces a degree of subjectivity to the assessment of causal structures; this is unavoidable. He points out, for instance, that different causal explanations of the same phenomenon may well target different levels of "explanatory depth," depending upon what counts as evidence. An example of such a difference in explanatory depth is the difference between explaining a car's forward motion as caused by (1) turning the key, putting the car in gear, and pressing the gas pedal and (2) the mechanics of the relevant car parts (Woodward 2003: 18). Yet Woodward insists that the relativity that such framing introduces does not prevent the structures from providing evidence of objective realities:

> [C]ausal judgments reflect both objective patterns of counterfactual dependence and which possibilities are taken seriously: they convey or summarize information about patterns of counterfactual dependence among those possibilities we are willing to take seriously. In other words, to the extent that subjectivity or interest relativity enters into causal judgments, it enters because it influences our judgments about which possibilities are to be taken seriously. However, once the set of serious possibilities is fixed, there is no further element of arbitrariness or subjectivity in our causal judgments: relative to a set of serious possibilities or alternatives, which causal claims are true or false is determined by objective patterns of counterfactual dependence.
>
> (90)

A manipulationist view is therefore willing to acknowledge that causes are inevitably human constructions, named and identified as "causes" because of their relevance to human interests, and selected from among what the interpreter deems "serious possibilities." But that fact does not make causality merely subjective.

Of course, Vasubandhu is not a modern theorist, but he exhibits many significant parallels with Woodward's manipulationist approach. In particular, Vasubandhu shows similarity (1) in the manipulationist structure itself (as we have seen above); (2) in his awareness of the subjectivity inherent in the process of causal evaluation (shown by his preference for perception over inference); and, as we will see now, (3) in affirming the necessity of "fixing" the subjective aspect when evaluating a cause.

A causal inference is imperfect – it is not as certain as a Buddha's perception – because it must appeal to our conceptual constructions. Nonetheless, the entity whose existence is proven by this kind of inference is to be deemed "real" because without it there is no explanation for specific regularities in our experience. On the other hand, conceptually constructed, experienced regularities are not, in themselves, to be taken as evidence of real entities. There must be input from the objective world. The subjective aspects of the scenario must therefore be held constant – "fixed" – across the manipulation process for a cause to be properly determined. Scientific experiments use controls to prevent shifts that arise *along with* the manipulation from appearing to be causal results of the manipulation itself. This kind of thinking should help us understand why Vasubandhu denies the substantial reality of entities he believes only appear to exist due to reified shifts in subjective perspective. Such entities violate the requirement of keeping the subjective aspect "fixed."

In a mirror image of his rejection of entities such as God and the self, which do not change no matter the scenario, Vasubandhu often criticizes entities that appear to exist only *because of* a change in scenario, or (to say the same thing) as a result of taking on a particular descriptive perspective. In one prominent example, Vasubandhu argues at length against Buddhists who believe in the *substantial reality* of the three times (past, present, and future). The times, he thinks, do not *exist* in themselves; they are only ways of talking about relations among entities – they are perspectives taken on those relations. In one telling passage, he explains that when the Buddha affirms the reality of the three times, he is only doing so in order to counter a non-Buddhist belief that there is *no such thing* as causality; but really, these words are only used in a relative sense:

> Therefore, the Lord says, "Past exists, future exists" in order to contradict the view that denies cause and effect, in order that one come to know the cause that precedes an existent, the existent result, and the preceding of existence for that which is to be.
>
> (AKBh 299.4–6)

Past and future existences are only affirmed as a way of explaining the truth of change in the flow of causality, which the Buddha must affirm in order to counter those who deny causality. As against the Buddhists, who believe that change and impermanence are fundamental truths, the (Hindu) Sāṃkhyas believe that results are preexistent in their causes. The Buddha needs to speak against such views, which entirely deny causality. But it is one thing to speak of past and future in order to refute the denial of causality, and something else entirely to affirm that past, present, and future are *substantial entities* – entities that have their own causes and results. Vasubandhu translates the three times in the Buddha's usage into causal language:

> Past = "the cause that precedes an existent."
> Present = "the existent result."
> Future = "the preceding of existence for that which is to be."

For Vasubandhu, past, present, and future are only names used to pick out different entities in a connected, causal series. His opponents make the mistake of reifying what is only a shift in perspective.

The Buddha's words must, therefore, be understood in context in two ways. First, they must be understood in the context of their proper audience, in this case, the Sāṃkhya opponent. The Buddha always spoke so as to counter whatever false views plagued the minds of his immediate auditors. Second, the Buddha's words must be understood in the context of the descriptive perspective taken when naming particular concepts or things. The Buddha believed in past, present, and future, but not as entities that all "exist" from a single descriptive perspective. In an impermanent universe, the three times are the very definition of changes in perspective. A Buddhist should never reify a particular relative, descriptive perspective.

In this way, manipulationism in causal explanation helps us to understand Vasubandhu's approach to scripture as well as causal entities. Vasubandhu complains of his opponents' reification of entities that have no causal necessity. Yet often these are entities affirmed by the Buddha. How can Vasubandhu deny the reality of entities affirmed in the Buddha's words? By explaining that the Buddha's words are framed within a particular perspective and enact, therefore, a specific intention. Such is the nature of language, to be spoken for a reason from a particular perspective. But this means that one must be careful in placing scripture within its proper interpretive context. Just as the reality of an entity is determined by its causal results, so too the meaning of the Buddha's words is determined by *their* causal results in the minds of his listeners.

In this way, we can see how Vasubandhu's approach to causality, which was to become definitive of Buddhist epistemology, lay behind his equally influential theorization of Buddhist scripture. It may be, in fact, that in putting the ontological questions first we have reversed the direction of motivation. Often, in South Asian thought, the needs of scriptural interpretation are "the tail that wags the dog" of doctrinal analysis (see Stoker 2004 and Bronkhorst 2011). For Vasubandhu, philosophical reasoning is always energized by scriptural analysis. His arguments never go far without renewing their commitment to scriptural citations, and one of his most extensive writings is a treatise on scriptural interpretation, the *Proper Mode of Exposition* (*Vyākhyāyukti*). This work is undoubtedly written from a Yogācāra perspective, but is clearly extending the views of scripture, under the same philosophical motive, that we have already been discussing. (On the *Vyākhyāyukti*, see Cabezon 1992, Skilling 2000, and Verhagen 2005.)

One of Vasubandhu's principal philosophical concerns was to combat dogmatism and, as we have seen, extreme literalism (reificationism?) in the interpretation of scripture. From the very beginning, Vasubandhu defended a diversity of scriptures and traditions of interpretation. For instance, he wrote the following in the *Commentary*:

> To say that a book which is transmitted in all the other traditions, and which contradicts neither sūtra nor reality, is not the Buddha's utterance because "we do not recite it" is mere recklessness.

> (Kapstein 2001: 359)

This kind of position could well have propelled him to pick up and study the Mahāyāna scriptures, and eventually to defend their legitimacy. (His brother Asaṅga is said to have sent Vasubandhu some Mahāyāna scriptures because he was worried for his brother's fate

as an ardent Hīnayānist.) Indeed, nearly the same argument appears in his *Proper Mode of Exposition*:

> Furthermore, if it is said, "The Great Vehicle is not the word of the Buddha," then we should dispute and investigate, "What is the definition of the Word of the Buddha?"
> Suppose someone should say, "The definition of the Word of the Buddha is what is accepted by the eighteen schools."
> In that case, scriptures associated with selflessness such as the *Emptiness of the Ultimate* (*Paramārthaśūnyatā*), which are not accepted by the noble Sammitīyas, and for instance the seven existences including the intermediate state, which are not accepted by those such as the Mahīśāsakas, will not be word of the Buddha.
>
> (VyY 227.8–19)

We see in both passages a principled openness to a diversity of doctrines and an unwillingness to accept the circular reasoning that would exclude views because they are not already accepted within one's own lineage or school. In fact, one of the more remarkable and most commented upon aspects of the *Commentary* is its citation of such a wide range of arguments from so many perspectives. Vasubandhu clearly believed that a Buddhist philosopher ought to take account of the widest possible range of Buddhist sources, whether scriptural or doctrinal. For this reason alone, as I mentioned above, we should be uncomfortable separating his works into scholastic, doctrinal categories.

Yet such openness required a nuanced theoretical framework and a subtle attention to interpretive detail, in order to prevent the many forms of Buddhist scriptures from devolving into self-undermining and self-contradiction. One way to read Vasubandhu's works, then, is as a great effort to balance diversity with coherence. In the *Proper Mode of Exposition*, we see this applied in its most systematic fashion. There, Vasubandhu stakes his claim to a view of scripture that maintains the importance and the validity of *both* Śrāvakayāna *and* Mahāyāna. In order to make this work, however, he must counter the scriptural exclusivism that each "vehicle" levels at the other, and at the same time counter each tradition's claim to the whole truth. Vasubandhu argues that all truths, even the truths of the *Perfection of Wisdom* scriptures, are relative and conventional:

> I exist conventionally as a person but not substantially, because of its imputation upon the aggregates. Karma and results exist substantially, conventionally. They do not exist ultimately, because they are objects of mundane knowledge. Supreme (*dam pa*; Skt. *parama*) is wisdom beyond the mundane, and its object (*don*; Skt. *artha*) is the ultimate (*don dam pa*; Skt. *paramārtha*). That object is the specific character of neither, because that object is an inexpressible general character.
>
> (VyY 236.18–21)

Let's work through this argument slowly. "I exist conventionally as a person but not substantially, because of its imputation upon the aggregates." This is a statement of the basic argument against the self with which I began the previous section, but with a crucial emphasis on the reality of *conventions*. The Śrāvaka denial of the self is not a denial *tout court*; it denies the self's substantial (causal) reality, but accepts that the Buddha properly uses words such as "I" and "self" in contexts where conventions call for it.

Going on: "Karma and results exist substantially, conventionally." This is an acknowledgment of the Śrāvaka position that karma is a substantial reality, but the application of the word "conventionally" to *karma* shifts us into a Mahāyāna view of the emptiness of all concepts. Śrāvakas do not distinguish between *substantial* entities and *ultimate* ones. So here we seem to have a rejection of the Śrāvaka position. But notice how, next, he explains *why* karma and results are not ultimate: "They do not exist ultimately, because they are objects of mundane knowledge." This is clearly a Mahāyāna position, but one that has a distinctive view of the nature of the ultimate. Karma and results are real, but not *ultimately* real, because they are ordinary concepts. He glosses the term "ultimate" by saying: "Supreme (*dam pa*) is wisdom beyond the mundane, and its object (*don*) is the ultimate (*don dam pa*)." The ultimate is thus *by definition* an object of supra-mundane awareness. This is why "That object" – meaning a supra-mundane object – "is the specific character of neither" – meaning karma and results – "because that object is an inexpressible general character." The nature of an ultimate is inexpressible – that is in fact what it *means* to say that it is ultimate.

This passage explains why, for the Mahāyāna, it is essential to reject the ultimate nature of the conventions of the Śrāvakayāna. There is clearly a shift from the doctrinal positions of the *Commentary*. But more than that, it sets up an explanation of why the scriptures and treatises *of the Mahāyāna as well* are only conventional. For, anything that is an object of mundane knowledge – anything that ordinary worldlings can understand – is by his definition merely conventional. Thus all scriptures, of all schools, are only conventional. This must be true even when the scriptures are attempting to articulate views that are beyond the conventional. This view recognizes a diversity of doctrines and views, but only by placing them all within the realm of the conventional:

> What is beyond the mundane is only one. The mundane has divisions.
>
> (VyY 237.5–6)

Vasubandhu is therefore acknowledging the ostensibly Mahāyāna position that all words and concepts are mere conventions, but without asserting that this fact vitiates the scriptural sources of the Śrāvakayāna. That is, if the point is that all entities are conventional truths, then the Mahāyāna scriptures must also be conventional truth only. Therefore, there is no argument based upon the distinction between conventional and ultimate that might undermine the *conventional* truth of the facts Abhidharma philosophers base upon Buddhist scriptures:

> Also, for some Mahāyānists who say that whereas all things, in their natures as a specific character, simply do not exist, this argument will also arise: What is being taught, conventionally, in those expressions where the Lord speaks of the existence of a thing just as it is, in the words, "The very existence of entities (*dharmas*) is taught"?
>
> (VyY 237.15–19)

The point is that whereas the ultimate nature of things is beyond intellection, the conventional nature of things must still be adjudicated based upon the full range of scriptural resources available. It is still necessary to determine which entities exist, even if they were taught *conventionally*. This amounts to a defense of Abhidharma studies within the context of the Mahāyāna, and at the same time an opening to the development of logic and epistemology.

These are, of course, the two main streams of Yogācāra thought – from Asaṅga and from Dignāga and Dharmakīrti. Vasubandhu's view is therefore an extremely confident affirmation of the utility of conventional language and logic to articulate the fullness of the conceptual universe, although always with an acknowledgement that reality itself, its causal ways *as they really are*, is beyond language and conceptualization:

> Where all dharmas are inexpressible characteristics, by speaking as with the conceptual constructions of fools, it is suitable even for the noble ones (*'phags pa*; Skt. *ārya*) to express with words what has no words.
>
> (VyY 239.18–22)

The teachings of the Buddha are merely the conceptual constructions of fools, because they are *for* fools – but if they are suitable for him to use, they are the best any of us can hope for.

We have seen how Vasubandhu's manipulationist view laid the ground for subsequent Indian Yogācāra epistemology – for Dignāga and Dharmakīrti – with their view of the bifurcation of reality into the objects of two means of knowledge (perception and inference), and the indispensable place of causality in inference and in defining the real. Now we can add, to this list of vital epistemological particulars, a belief in the broad conventional utility of epistemology (*pramāṇa*), and the notion that there are multiple, legitimately applied levels of conventional truth – what Georges Dreyfus (1997: 49) has dubbed the "ascending scale of analysis" approach to truth in Buddhist epistemology.

Vasubandhu's Abhidharma works aimed to distinguish Buddhists from non-Buddhists by characterizing the reification of entities named in scriptures as a violation of the basic logic of impermanence and no-self. His approach as an advocate of Mahāyāna, remarkably, extends this view into a critique of the reification of emptiness and the dogmatic adherence to Mahāyāna scriptural exclusivity. From the history of Indian Buddhism to follow, with its broad acceptance of epistemology and a burgeoning diversity of scriptural resources within the Mahāyāna, we may judge that Vasubandhu's approach was a sign, perhaps even a cause, of this new Mahāyāna mainstream.

ABBREVIATIONS

AKBh = *Abhidharmakośabhāṣya* (Pradhan 1975)
VyY = *Vyākhyāyukti* (Lee 2001)

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DIGNĀGA AND DHARMAKĪRTI ON PERCEPTION AND SELF-AWARENESS

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INTRODUCTION

If Buddhist metaphysics grows out of a concern with explaining the nature of reality – such that gaining an insight into this nature leads to the gradual elimination of confusion – Buddhist epistemology provides the methodological foundation for pursuing this pragmatic goal. Two representative figures in particular stand at this defining turn in the development of a systematic theory of knowledge within the Indian Buddhist tradition: Dignāga (ca. 480–540) and Dharmakīrti (ca. seventh century). A pivotal figure in the development of Indian logic and epistemology, Dignāga challenged his contemporaries to justify their reliance on scriptural authority and shifted the focus of subsequent developments in Indian philosophy from a concern with the aims and rules of debate to an investigation of the means by which one may obtain reliable knowledge (*pramāṇa*). What is remarkable is that he accomplished this task, unlike his predecessors, by engaging his opponents largely on their own terms. His great successor, Dharmakīrti, would correct, defend, and further expand Dignāga's epistemological project, making original contributions of his own and in many ways surpassing his predecessor. Indeed, Dharmakīrti's overarching impact on subsequent generations of philosophers in India and beyond is such that he is often taken to represent the standard account of Buddhist metaphysics and epistemology. Only Nāgārjuna (ca. 150–250 CE) – and only much later with the ascendency of Madhyamaka in Tibet – would come to command a more prominent status in the Buddhist philosophical canon.

Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's contributions to what has come to be known as "Buddhist epistemology" (sometimes referred in the specialist literature by the Sanskrit neologism *pramāṇavāda*, lit. "doctrine of epistemic warrants") range from precise accounts of the relation between language and conceptual thought to detailed explorations of the content and character of experience. Perhaps the most salient aspect of this new (and enduring) mode of critical inquiry is its attempt to synthesize a causal account of cognition with the dialogical-disputational concerns of validating belief. That is, Buddhist philosophers who follow in the footsteps of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti seek to explain cognition in causal terms and treat as warranted only that cognition that corresponds to its object and is produced in the right way. On this account, then, perceptual judgments of the sort that purport to give

us an object as qualified by a certain property, such as blueness (as captured by statements such as: "this is blue") are not treated as warranted instances of perceptual cognition. The Buddhist epistemologists thus thematize the old philosophical problem of the difference between "seeing" and "seeing as" and contend that only direct and unmediated modes of awareness should be counted as instances of warranted perceptual cognition.

It is important to keep in mind that systematic inquiries into the foundations of our beliefs are a ubiquitous feature of early Buddhist thought in India. Indeed, seminal Abhidharma treatises like the *Points of Controversy* (*Kathāvatthu*), which are specifically concerned with the rules of argumentation and the various types of debates, catalogue a wide range of doctrinal points of dispute (see the chapter by Hayes in this volume). Likewise, representative works such as Nāgārjuna's *Dispelling of Disputes* (*Vigrahavyāvartanī*), Āryadeva's *One Hundred Verses Treatise* (*Śataśāstra*), and Vasubandhu's Rules of Debate (*Vādavidhi*) extend this preoccupation with codifying the rules of debate to include a range of metaphysical positions insofar as they rely on methods of positive argumentation (see the chapter by Gold in this volume). A systematic concern with issues that are recognizably epistemological in character (What are the sources of knowledge? What are its limits? What are its conditions?), however, only emerges with Dignāga. What makes Dignāga's work (and that of his great successor, Dharmakīrti) particularly significant is a willingness to engage with, and pursue, philosophical problems that are central to the Sanskritic philosophical tradition. One of these central problems concerns the nature and scope of perceptual knowledge: that is, what specific type of awareness best captures what it is like to perceive, under which aspects a cognition (of this type) may be deemed epistemically reliable, and what may one reasonably assert on the basis of such empirical testimony.

Disciplined observation, of the sort that purports to explain the role of consciousness and cognition in the acquisition of belief, has always been central to philosophical reflection in both India and the West. The notion that a characteristically perceptual mode of apprehension actually plays a far greater role in the formation of belief than hitherto thought, however, is relatively recent, and reflects seminal advances in the empirical study of cognition. What is particularly significant about the Buddhist epistemological project is that it provides an account of empirical awareness that is conspicuously modern in its outlook. Not only do Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and their followers appeal to empirical observation as the ultimate source of evidence in explaining the epistemic status of a given cognitive event (and, furthermore, justify their position by invoking the Buddha's own reliance on sound reasoning and careful empirical scrutiny); they do so in a way that does not overlook the psychological underpinnings of this specific mode of inquiry. If achieving practical ends is the goal, then reliance on accurate observations and on an understanding of the contextual and dispositional factors that constrain, condition, and direct our perceptual and intentional states is crucial.

Buddhist philosophers, like many of their counterparts in the West, realized a long time ago that our linguistic and conceptual practices are rooted in pre-predicative modes of apprehension that provide implicit access to whatever is immediately present to awareness. Indeed, if one fails to perceive the difference between a column of fire and one of dust, to use a stock example in the Sanskrit philosophical repertoire, then any inference based on this misapprehension will fail to yield reliable knowledge about the event in question. To early generations of scholars of Indian and Buddhist philosophy who came under the influence of logical positivism, this attempt to tie logical reasoning to observation seemed like a typical case of psychologism (that is, of conflating logical reasoning with the psychology of perception). Recent advances in the study of perception have demonstrated that our reasoning and deliberating practices are

grounded in perceptual and nondiscursive process in a far greater measure than most philosophers hitherto thought. Though the jury is still out on precisely what specific role different perceptual modalities play in grounding belief, these findings appear to vindicate an intuition that Buddhist epistemologists share with empiricist philosophers in the tradition of John Locke and David Hume, namely that perception is in some sense foundational for knowledge. In adopting this largely empiricist outlook, the Buddhist epistemological enterprise reflects a growing preoccupation with those types of pragmatic inquiry that alone can lead to achieving such desired ends as the elimination of suffering.

This chapter explores one particular aspect of the Buddhist epistemological enterprise: the notion that epistemological disputes cannot properly be settled without taking into account the particular understanding of the structure of awareness advanced by each school of thought. Our approach here is not merely exegetical and historical but descriptive and constructive. Its aim is to examine the contributions of Buddhist thinkers to this first-millennium pan-Indian philosophical conversation about perception and self-awareness in ways that also showcase the continuing relevance in contemporary philosophical debates of some of the issues with which they engage.

FROM SENSE AWARENESS TO EPISTEMIC ASCERTAINMENT

The descriptive analyses of consciousness and cognition found in the vast Abhidharma literature provide the foundation upon which Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and their successors advance their claims to knowledge. The phenomenological stance at work in the Abhidharma means that the elements of existence and/or experience (or what the Ābhidharmikas call "dharmas") are examined in such a way that they are never dissociated from the types of cognitive events in which they are instantiates. Thus, in the case of sensation, a distinction is made between any given sensory modality (say, vision) and the medium that implements it (the visual system). The senses are not treated as the instruments of an internal agent or as physical organs interacting with empirical objects, but rather as receptacles of experience. A distinction is thus observed between the object and its mode of presentation.

Thus, Abhidharma philosophers account for sense experience by reducing it to its constitutive elements and processes (see Joseph Walser's chapter "Abhidharma" in this volume). This is the well-known reductionism that is a hallmark of the Abhidharma project, with the caveat that the Buddhist reductionist is not an eliminativist. Indeed, the no-self doctrine, on this view, is meant to dispel the illusion of permanent, substantive selves, not to dispense with any talk of subjective experience altogether. The phenomenological reduction at work in the Abhidharma is intended to provide a better account of the subjective character of experience, without which identifying and countering unwholesome dispositions and cultivating wholesome ones could not be achieved. Take, for instance, the well-known canonical account of the principle of dependent arising (*pratītya-samutpāda*). Things come together as a result of a series of mutually sustaining causal relationships: visual consciousness thus arises from the coming together of the eye and objects with reflectance properties, feeling from the affective and dispositional saliencies that accompany this visual experience, perception from this feeling, and so on, leading up to conceptual processes where the dependency relation is far less obvious than it is for bare sensory awareness.

What is peculiar about this account of cognitive dynamics is the notion that some type of awareness accompanies each sensory modality by virtue of the fact that it arises together

with it. In other words, one does not merely see or hear; rather, one sees shapes of a particular kind and under specific circumstances. Abhidharma philosophers would eventually come to make progressively finer dissociations between different types of cognitive awareness and to identify the causal order in which conscious cognitive awareness emerges in the psycho-physical or pheno-physical domain. Since the mere presence of an object within the range of a specific sense modality is not enough for a percept to arise, there must be, so the argument goes, an additional element (or step) in the process: attention. Indeed, without attentive awareness being directed to a specific region of the perceptual field, it is hard to explain how the steady flow of sensory impressions may give rise to a percept. By singling out attention as a crucial contributing factor in the emergence of intentional states of cognitive awareness, Abhidharma philosophers concede that causation in the physical domain can only be understood from the perspective of consciousness, because consciousness is indispensable to effecting the changes that an individual engaged on the noble eightfold path must undergo in order to make any real progress toward awakening.

Of course, the Abhidharma reductionist project is not limited simply to identifying presumably irreducible elements in the causal chain of events, or their constitutive order, but extends to the fundamental units of human experience. Breaking down each cognitive event to its irreducible constitutive elements holds the key to understanding the most fundamental aspects of the human condition. Ultimately, as we have already noted, this reductive analysis seeks to map out the mental domain such that afflictive tendencies may be properly identified and eradicated. A difficulty arises when we consider that Abhidharma philosophers must reconcile the seeming continuance of cognitive awareness with the view that phenomena do not endure for more than a moment. Indeed, on the typical Buddhist account of the momentariness of all phenomena, visual awareness and visual object are both events within an ongoing stream of relations. If the mental domain comprises nothing but discrete series of cognitive episodes, how is one to account for appropriation, grasping, and recognition? How, that is, does it come to be that the blue sky is for me to see, that it happens in my mental series? The causal account of cognition at work in the Abhidharma literature thus provides only an incomplete picture of cognitive dynamics, for it cannot explain how such episodic cognitive events can effectively sort between an inner and outer domain of experience. Even though consciousness itself is but another event in the series of dependently arisen phenomena, later Abhidharma thinkers like Vasubandhu would come to realize that it stands apart from the other elements in the series as possessing this unique capacity to sort through the constitutive elements of experience.

Neither the canonical literature nor the Abhidharma provide detailed and systematic accounts of the means by which one can discriminate between veridical and nonveridical states of cognitive awareness. As we noted above, works such as the *Points of Controversy* at best identify and sort through a range of views the aim of which is principally that of establishing adequate rules of debate. Typically, these debates revolve around issues such as whether all knowledge is analytic, whether one can know the minds of others, and whether sensations, as mental states, follow one another continuously. Such debates, which involve a back-and-forth exchange concerning statements of the sort "Is *a b*? ("Is knowledge analytic?"), most certainly appeal to principles that are discerningly like forms of material implication, contraposition, and some version of *reductio ad absurdum*. These "reasoned examinations" (*yukti*) of controversial points, which are typical examples of what philosophers call noneristic dialogues, do not, however, explore the sources of epistemically warranted belief in any systematic way.

THE CONDITIONS FOR PERCEPTUAL KNOWLEDGE

Philosophical positions do not arise in a vacuum. Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's epistemological project develops in the context of concerted efforts to answer a series of challenges: first, from Brahmanical philosophers who doubted that Buddhists had the requisite capacity to deploy the methods of investigative reasoning devised by the Naiyāyikas, and second, from Buddhist thinkers like Nāgārjuna, whose dialectical stance with regard to the nature of reality is that it is inaccessible to thought: although we may form useful approximations about how things (or the cognitive events that instantiate them) are, these are at best mere conventions and reflect the conceptual practices of a given philosophical culture and epoch. Indeed, Nāgārjuna, much like Wittgenstein, invites us to abandon the illusions of the knowledge project and come to terms with the view that in effect there are no genuine epistemological problems. Since on the view advanced by Nāgārjuna and his followers all things are empty of essence or intrinsic existence, they do not exist apart from the web of interrelated causes and conditions that instantiate them. The emptiness thesis captures not only the condition of entities in the class of what J. L. Austin calls "medium-sized dry goods," but also the character of the mental domain itself. That is, no cognition obtains on its own, but itself is the result of multiple causal and conditioning factors. On this dialectical stance, we can no more give an account of our subjective experience in phenomenologically neutral terms then we can give an account of the experienced objectivity (of the things themselves) in physically neutral terms. Reality itself, as a concept encompassing the totality of existents that populate any complete ontology, is a relational concept and, as such, is subject to the fourfold logical possibilities (A, not A, both A and not A, neither A nor not A). Take the example of a conscious awareness that, given its association with the capacity to reveal, is examined by drawing an analogy with fire. Since, like fire, cognition apparently has the capacity to illuminate, it may be assumed that this capacity is something that consciousness awareness possesses intrinsically. But just as fire depends on fuel, so also conscious awareness must owe its existence (and also its illuminating capacity) to something other than itself.

Unlike Nāgārjuna's assumption of a dialectical stance, Dignāga and Dharmakīrti adopt the methodology of Nyāya philosophers (though not their metaphysical and epistemological convictions) and assert that what exists (and how) can actually become an object of both empirical scrutiny and conceptual analysis. In other words, for Dignāga and Dharmakīrti *there is* a way that things are that is actually quite different from how they show up to us in discerning awareness. As Bimal Krishna Matilal (1986: 26) noted some time ago, there is a convergence (indeed, with few exceptions, a coincidence) between the domain of the knowables and the domain of "existents." Nearly all South Asian philosophers who reject in some form or another the skeptical position agree upon this much. A problem arises when one attempts to establish the number and nature of those sources or instruments by which such knowledge is actually obtained.

Traditionally, Indian philosophers have tended to be inclusive and exhaustive in their identification of possible sources of knowledge. Apart from perception and inference, analogy to a known fact of experience and verbal testimony are also taken to provide doxastic types of evidence. For Dignāga, who champions a rather spartan epistemology, analogy and verbal testimony are but aspects of inference and do not deserve to be treated as separate instruments of knowledge. As he puts it in his now-classic work, the *Collection on the Sources of Knowledge* (*Pramāṇa-samuccaya* I, 1):

> The sources of knowledge are perception and inference because the object of cognition has only two characteristics. There is no object of cognition other than the particular characteristic and the universal characteristic because perception has as its object the particular and inference the universal characteristic of the thing.

What we encounter here is an attempt to establish epistemology on a neutral ground by limiting the evidence to what can be perceptually apprehended. Thus, unlike Nāgārjuna and his Mādhyamika followers, Dignāga not only asserts (as most philosophers do) the possibility of knowledge, but also specifies the constraints and conditions for the acquisition thereof. Thus perception performs its epistemic role not merely by virtue of attending to the object at hand, but by doing so under a specific modality that is nonconceptual in character. In short, perceptual judgment – by means of which we apprehend an object as the locus of a specific quality or as belonging to a given class – is excluded from the domain of warranted empirical awareness. Perceiving a cow as a member of a specific mammalian species, or as possessing such characteristics as dewlap and so on, is not an instance of veridical perception. Perception can only give us the phenomena as directly present to awareness, as textures or clusters of sensory experience in a continuum that does not set strict boundaries between the world and its apprehension. That is, perception gives us the world *as perceived*. Of course, restricting the domain of perception solely to types of nonconceptual awareness raises a problem: how are we to explain perceptual illusions? Furthermore, if in perceiving we do not discern the characteristics of objects, then the content of perception cannot form an object of conceptual analysis.

Confronted with similar sorts of problems, Nyāya philosophers eventually came to define perception as "a cognition generated through the contact between the object and the sensory faculty, which is inexpressible, inerrant, and definitive" (*Nyāya Sūtra* I: 14). Indeed, Buddhist philosophers like Asaṅga and Vasubandhu (ca. fourth century) agree with the Naiyāyikas that inerrancy is an essential condition for the reliability of empirical awareness: how else would one exclude from the domain of perception illusory experiences (like the appearance of a circle of fire in a twirling firebrand or a moving tree when running through a forest)? Dignāga's failure to recognize the perceptual basis of certain types of cognitive error, and his insistence on attributing all instances of defective perception to higher order cognitive process, would eventually meet with strong criticism from his opponents. In his magnum opus, the *Commentary on the Sources of Knowledge* (*Pramāṇa-vārttika*), which is essentially an extensive commentary on Dignāga's principal work (and which it would eventually supplant), Dharmakīrti retains Dignāga's definition of perception unaltered. Only in a later work, the *Settling on the Sources of Reliable Cognition* (*Pramāṇa-viniścaya*), does Dharmakīrti append the qualifier "nonerroneous" as a condition for the reliability of perceptual cognitions. This alteration and the implications thereof for any robust theory of perceptual knowledge constitute an important point of debate for subsequent generations of Buddhist and Brahmanical philosophers: what precisely does it mean for cognition to be nonerroneous (*abhrānta*)? Should nonerroneous be interpreted to mean nondeceptive, thus calling into question the conditions under which a cognition may be said to deviate (*avyabhicāra*) from the object that is immediately present to awareness?

It is true that Dignāga does distinguish between perceptual judgments and pseudo-perceptions (lumping together cases such as the illusory motion of the river bank when floating down a river with conditions like cloudy vision (*timira*), the apparent perception of thread-like fragments in the visual field), but he is not very clear about whether these

instances of pseudo-perception are caused by impaired sensory organs or by some kind of conceptual misapprehension. Dharmakīrti, however, is less ambivalent. For him cases of cloudy vision are unmistakably forms of cognitive impairment.

We have already established that the defining characteristic of Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's epistemological project is its thoroughgoing empiricism: indeed, the notion that perception – specifically a direct mode of cognitive awareness – can serve as evidential ground for knowledge, including knowledge gained by other means (such as inference), is central to this project. Of course, in adopting this empirical approach to knowledge, the Buddhist epistemologists were not necessarily innovators. Already in the canonical literature we come across injunctions that challenge appeals to reason and logical inquiry as acceptable pursuits for the Buddhist adept. Rather, as the Buddha urges, one ought to train oneself to discern wholesome from unwholesome states of mind and deploy that discernment for the purpose of undertaking specific practical tasks. But such discernment is in effect a type of cognitive awareness that is essentially perceptual in character. The question arises: what could serve as a basis for such discriminating awareness?

Continuing a tradition of analysis with deep roots in the Abhidharma – in this case the specifically Sautrāntika Abhidharma position of his teacher Vasubandhu – Dignāga identifies a certain state of cognitive awareness that, while lacking in any conceptual discrimination, is nonetheless inherently reflexive, as the best type of evidential ground there is. Veridical perceptions are thus constitutively self-intimating: that is, they disclose both the objective and subjective aspects of cognitive apprehension. Only these instances of knowledge intimation can be said to provide access to the domain of unique particulars that populate the austere ontology of the Buddhist epistemologist.

Delineating the contours of the perceptual domain and providing a systematic analysis of its content are central to any epistemological enterprise. For the Buddhist, and for reasons that will be discussed below, mapping out the empirical domain is of the utmost importance. Indeed, without some way of differentiating veridical perceptions from, say, perceptual illusions or pseudo-perceptions, it would be practically impossible to effectively navigate one's environment or achieve any pragmatic ends. Although the Buddhist epistemologist shares with his Brahmanical opponents the view that perceptual awareness necessarily involves some kind of contact between the sense and the object or, at the very least, the presence of some object (whose ontological status may be ambiguous) before awareness, they disagree about both the constitutive character of this perceptual awareness and the kinds of objects that it ultimately intends.

On a superficial level one could plausibly argue that the Buddhist epistemologist's definition of perception is informed by his ontological commitments, specifically by the stipulation, common to Abhidharma metaphysics, that what should count as the ultimately real is whatever can be neither physically nor analytically reduced any further: thus, a partless entity. But the Buddhist epistemologist does not deny that partite entities such as chariots and forests are real (unlike the antirealist position that Mādhyamika philosophers adopt), only that their reality is merely conventional, the result of social conventions and common linguistic practices. Why, then, should epistemology be pressed into service to defend an ontology of partless atoms (or of indivisible moments of consciousness), as demanded by the provisions of Abhidharma metaphysics? This is one of the most pervasive criticisms that Buddhist epistemologists must confront, and one that leads to a revision of both Abhidharma reductionism and Madhyamaka dialectics.

To see how Buddhist epistemology (as envisioned by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti) meets this challenge, let us finally pursue two related questions: first, what do Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's analyses of the content of perception tell us about their metaphysical commitments? And second, how do Abhidharma descriptions of the structure of awareness inform the Buddhist epistemologist's understanding of the role that this aspect of cognition plays in achieving practical ends?

PERCEPTION, SELF-AWARENESS, AND THE DUAL-ASPECT THEORY OF MENTAL STATES

How do we know *that* we know? That is, how, and by what means, are we justified in ascertaining that a particular cognitive event, say an instance of perception or judgment, counts as knowledge and can lead to successful practice? Furthermore, how do we know *when* we know? How do we know when all the conditions for the reliability of a cognitive event have been met such that, for instance, my awareness of a seeming conch shell is veridical, or my belief in the impermanence of sound is a true belief? In the first instance, my perception is veridical when it is prompted by the appropriate causal and conditional factors. In the second, my belief is correct or justified because it is consistent with a set of basic beliefs about causality and the emergent character of phenomena. But this manner of proceeding merely states the answer without addressing the deeper issue that is at stake in the Buddhist epistemological account of cognition: it (viz., cognition) achieves its condition of veridicality only insofar as it happens within a given mental series. No epistemic account of cognition is complete that does not explain this horizon structure that, among all the elements in the chain of dependently arisen phenomena, cognition alone possesses.

As we noted above with regard to the canonical account of dependent arising, things and the cognitive events that instantiate them arise together in a mutually sustaining chain of causal relationships. Considerations about the direction of the dependency relations apart, Buddhist philosophers are quite clear that cognition supervenes on some basis. Disagreements only arise with regard to whether this basis should be located in the physical or the mental domain. For an Abhidharma philosopher like Saṃghabhadra (ca. late fourth–early fifth century), it is obvious that any alteration in the physical substrate of cognition, say in the eye, must elicit an alteration in the quality of the corresponding sense modality, in this case of visual experience. The question is: does apperceptive cognition itself, as one of five basic modes of cognitive activity, supervene on some more fundamental basis? Or is it merely affected by such things as changes in body orientation, the intensity and type of the stimulus involved, and other dispositional factors? In other words, where exactly in this dynamic process of cognitive emergence do we locate self-awareness? Should apperception be taken to play the function that is assigned to self-awareness, or is it rather the case that self-awareness is an aspect of cognition simpliciter rather than another (perhaps irreducible) type of cognitive awareness?

Like his predecessors, Dignāga too seems intent on securing an epistemological foundation for his analysis of the constitutive elements of existence and/or experience. For him the question is not simply (or no longer) what I must know in order to achieve a given goal, but rather what specifically are the means for acquiring such knowledge. If attending to the unfolding of mental and physical events as they arise is the key to, say, Buddhist contemplative practice, then this attending capacity must be assigned a greater epistemic role. It is likely that in problematizing empirical knowledge as he does, and in distinguishing

between different types of perception (sensory, mental, introspective, and yogic), Dignāga is simply extending this Abhidharma quest for the ultimate basis of cognitive activity, which eventually he comes to locate in a form of pre-reflective self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*).

It is an axiomatic principle of Abhidharma philosophy of mind that empirical awareness is modality-specific: the content and character of visual experience is different from that of feelings, smells, or tastes. It is obvious that content plays an important role here: what it is like to encounter objects with reflectance properties is quite different from what it is like to come across objects that elicit affective response. Following Vasubandhu, the Buddhist epistemologists recognize that cognition has an intentional character, that it is in some sense always about an object of its own, whether external or internal. But whereas Vasubandhu still sees this mental faculty as the repository of ordinary afflictive tendencies – that is, as essentially an afflicted mind (*kliṣṭa-manas*) responsible for perpetuating a sense of oneself as a substantive self – for Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and their successors self-awareness is no longer the mistaken awareness of oneself as an enduring locus of awareness, but a fundamental pre-reflective cognitive modality. The Buddhist epistemologists thus advance a thesis that is best described as reflexivism: roughly, the notion that self-awareness consists in conscious cognitive events being inherently self-revealing.

A great deal of Buddhist epistemological reflection in India is concerned with explaining the role of this pre-reflective self-awareness in settling disputes about whether certain cognitions are intrinsically or extrinsically ascertained. In spelling out the conditions of ascertainment, a syncretic Buddhist thinker like Dharmottara (ca. eighth century) contends that perceptions of the sort that are associated with achieving practical ends may be intrinsically ascertained simply because they are intentionally constituted, whereas perceptions that are prompted by some external object are not. Thus, the apprehension of fire as having the capacity to burn and cause heat may be intrinsically ascertained, whereas the apprehension of its generating causal totality (whether it is fuelled by wood or some other flammable substance) is not. But the conditions of ascertainment are not the only issues that preoccupy the Buddhist reflexivist. Equal attention is given to the emergence and role of the first-person stance. How, asks the Buddhist epistemologist, does this primitive or pre-reflective form of self-awareness underwrite the activity of conscious awareness we typically associate with the use of personal and possessive pronouns such as 'I' and 'mine'? Is this 'I' merely a conventional designation that does not apply to anything real, as Nāgasena had claimed in his exchange with the King Milinda (in the *Milinda-pañho*)? Is the 'I' merely a placeholder or a linguistic device that lacks a fixed referent, as the doctrine of no-self would have it? Or is it rather the case that this pre-reflective self-awareness is an explanatory primitive, without which we cannot make sense of the fact that experience has a specific first-personal character?

We began our discussion with the observation that one of the defining characteristics of the Buddhist epistemological project is reconciliation of analyses of the character of cognitive awareness (as inherited from the Abhidharma) with dialogical-disputational needs of validating belief. Indeed, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, and their successors are concerned, in true epistemological fashion, not simply with how things and the mental states that instantiate them are judged to be (disregarding any account of their mode of presentation), but with how things show up to discerning awareness. This specific ability not only to attend to the contents of experience but also to reflect upon them (thus to inhabit a particular stance) captures a characteristically philosophical orientation. Without this orientation there is no view from

somewhere and thus no position to defend. Against the allegedly positionless stance of Madhyamaka, the Buddhist epistemologists seek not simply to defend the notion that there are real epistemological problems, and effective means for addressing them, but also show an (if one may venture to add) honest appreciation for the first-personal stance. Cognitive events do not just occur in the mental stream; rather, they present themselves to individual subjects of experience as theirs to have or be in them. In effect, by claiming that perceptual awareness has this two-aspectual character (involving both an objectual-aspect (*viṣayābhāsa*) and the cognition's own self-apprehension (*svābhāsa*), the Buddhist epistemologist joins contemporary philosophers like Peter Strawson, who claims that statements of the sort that ask whether some inner occurrent experience is mine are nonsensical. A person cannot simply feel pain and wonder whether the pain is hers, for feeling pain is constitutively something it is like to be in. Pain is not merely an event in consciousness, but something that discloses the first-personal character of experience, any experience.

Dignāga's original insight about the subjective character of experience is thus meant to capture the specific ways of being that Western existentialist phenomenology refers to as being-in-the-world and Abhidharma philosophy terms the phenomenal world of experience (*loka-saṃjñā*). His concern is to provide an explanatory account of those types of cognitive events that, while intentionally constituted, are not prompted by the coming together of object and attentiveness. Seeing requires that there be objects that are seen (under the right conditions of luminescence), but self-awareness, especially for the Buddhist who is committed to the no-self doctrine, lacks such anchorage. What most Buddhists prior to Dignāga failed to notice (perhaps given doctrinal commitments to the no-self view) is the fact that experience is not simply contentful (that is, it is not simply of an object or intentional) but also *character*-possessing (it has a particular feel, mode of disclosure, and horizon structure).

Of course, reclaiming the character of awareness for Buddhist epistemology is not a novel enterprise. Dignāga's approach is mainly concerned with the epistemological implications of nonreflexivist accounts of cognition, which he views as vulnerable to the problem of infinite regress. If it takes a subsequent instance of awareness to apprehend this occurrent cognition, then another instance will be required to know the latter and so on. Even assuming that this retrospective awareness of one's mental states is made possible by a special type of recognition (as a cognition occurring after a cognition of the same type), this could not explain why this sort of cognition emerges at all, and why in one mental stream and not another. Dignāga's defense of the reflexivity thesis is also meant to counter what he essentially regards as the regressive character of representational or higher-order theories of consciousness.

CONCLUSION: INTENTIONALITY AND THE STRUCTURE OF EXPERIENCE

The dual-aspect theory of mental states that Dignāga advances (much like its Western endorsement by philosophers like Brentano and Sartre) is meant to capture this notion that cognition's intentional content (its object directedness) cannot be accounted for without its subjective aspect, without reference to its mode of presentation. Thus, Dignāga states: "That cognition has two aspects is [known] from the difference between the cognition of the object and the cognition of that [cognition]" (*Pramāṇa-samuccaya* I.11ab). In other words, mental events such as perceiving, judging, or remembering cannot be distinguished as such only on the basis of the objects they intend: a physical entity of some kind, a concept or a

past experience. Without cognition's self-intimating aspect – that is, without this implicitly self-aware aspect of cognition – one could not tell the difference between perception and conception or judgment and desire. How are we to account for Dignāga's position on the subjective aspect of experience?

One possibility is to adopt the intentionalist stance and state that the subjective aspect captures the content of one's experience as the perspectival stance from which it is an experience of a particular type of world-presenting content. This interpretation avoids collapsing Dignāga's subjective aspect of cognition into an account of the character of experience as evinced by locutions of the "what it is like" type. But this move comes at the heavy cost of sacrificing the feasibility of the first-personal account of experience. Even assuming that the subjective aspect is nothing but the mode of presentation of an intentional mental state, it cannot explain why the content in question is object-directed rather than subject-directed. It is noncontroversial for both Buddhist and Brahmanical philosophers that cognitions are intentionally constituted, that they are about an object of their own (*saviṣayaka*). But just because the mode of presentations of cognitions is itself intentionally constituted does not mean that cognition can be explained entirely in terms of its intentional content. An interpretation of the dual-aspect theory of mental states that reduces intentionality to the various aspects of a mental state's intentional content in effect reduces intentionality to a function that cognition has, namely that of aboutness. As such it faces the same problem of infinite regress that confronts higher-order or representationalist theories of cognition.

Another possibility – and one more likely to capture the intent of Dignāga's epistemological stance on self-awareness (*svasaṃvedana*) – is that the dual-aspect theory of mental states is meant to capture both the phenomenal content (*viṣaya-ākāra*) and the phenomenal character (*jñāna-ākāra*) of experience. On this latter interpretation, the dual-aspect theory captures both the content and the horizon structure of awareness (or its perspectival outlook).

The principle of momentariness posed a challenge to Abhidharma philosophers concerned with explaining the sense of recollection that accompanies each mental series: if discrete and episodic events are all there is to have a mind and be conscious, how do grasping and appropriation occur? The causal account of cognition at work in the Abhidharma, it seems, offers only an incomplete picture of the mental domain. While *vijñāna*, the Sanskrit term typically translated as "consciousness," conveys a sense both of differentiation and of discernment (between mental states and their types), the problem of how one comes to sort between an inner and outer domain of experience remains unexplained.

Reclaiming the subjective character of experience is thus indispensable to any robust account of cognition, its mode of ascertainment, and its epistemic status. Whether or not the reflexivity thesis advances the Buddhist epistemological account of perception and self-awareness in a fruitful direction is a subject of much debate among Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's Indian and Tibetan interpreters. What is less controversial is that, following Dharmakīrti, the attempt to reposition the debate about the phenomenal qualities of experience in terms of relations between the aspects of cognition can no longer proceed without making fundamental assumptions about the character of experience.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

WONHYO

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A. Charles Muller

INTRODUCTION

Wonhyo 元曉 (617–686) was one of the most influential Buddhist thinkers, writers, and commentators, not only within the Korean Buddhist tradition, but in all of East Asian Buddhist history. With his life spanning the end of the Korean Three Kingdoms period and the beginning of the Unified Silla, Wonhyo played a vital role in the reception and assimilation of the broad range of doctrinal Buddhist streams that flowed into East Asia at the time. While Wonhyo was most interested in, and affected by, Tathāgatagarbha (Womb of Thus Gone Ones; Ch. *rulai zang* 如來藏) and Yogācāra (Ch. Weishi 唯識) systems of thought, in his extensive scholarly works and in commentaries and essays he embraced the entire spectrum of Mahāyāna Buddhist teachings that were received in East Asia, including such traditions as Pure Land (K. Jeongto Jong 淨土宗), *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* studies (K. Yeolban Jong 涅槃宗), *Lotus Sūtra* studies, Flower Ornament (K. Hwaeom 華嚴宗), Middle Way (K. Samnon 三論宗; Skt. Madhyamaka), Logic (K. Inmyeong 因明), Monastic Discipline (Vinaya) studies (K. Yeyul 戒律), and State Protection.

He wrote commentaries on virtually all of the most influential Mahāyāna scriptures, altogether totaling over eighty works in over 200 fascicles. Among his most influential works were the commentaries he wrote on the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* (K. *Daeseung gisillon* 大乘起信論), the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* (K. *Yeolban gyeong* 涅槃經), and the **Vajrasamādhi Sūtra* (K. *Geumgang sammae gyeong jing* 金剛三昧經). These were treated with utmost respect by leading Buddhist scholars in China and Japan, and his work on the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* helped to establish that text as one of the most influential in East Asia. Wonhyo spent the earlier part of his career as a monk, but later left the priesthood to spread the Buddhadharma as a layman. Recorded as having led a colorful and unfettered lifestyle during this period, Wonhyo ended up becoming somewhat of a folk hero in Korea. He was a colleague and friend of the influential Silla Hwaeom monk Uisang 義湘 (625–702), and it can be said that Wonhyo's scholarly efforts at elucidating Tathāgatagarbha doctrines contributed to Uisang's efforts in establishing Hwaeom as a dominant stream of doctrinal thought on the Korean peninsula.[1]

WONHYO'S LIFE

Although there is no extant comprehensive biographical source for Wonhyo, scholars have been able to construct a general outline of his life based on fragmentary accounts.[2] Wonhyo was born in the thirty-ninth year of the Jinpyeong reign (617), with the secular family name of Seol 薛, was probably ordained at around the age of fifteen (632),[3] and subsequently studied under a number of accomplished teachers. From the broad scope of topics covered in his writings, it is obvious that he had fairly direct access to developments in the various forms of Buddhist doctrine being studied in China at that time. Wonhyo is said to have studied the *Lotus Sūtra* with the eminent monk Nangji,[4] and in the process of his commentarial work often consulted with the monk Hyegong.[5] He is also recorded as having studied the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* and *Vimalakīrti-sūtra* together with Bodeok and Uisang respectively.[6]

The most often-cited episode from Wonhyo's life found within these hagiographies is that of his attempt to go to study in the Tang in China – the ultimate learning experience for Korean and Japanese monks for a number of centuries. According to one account, Wonhyo was motivated to make this trip primarily for the purpose of gaining access to the new Yogācāra teachings that were being introduced through the translations of Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–64).[7] But before even getting out of Silla, Wonhyo apparently lost interest in taking this trip and returned home. According to the hagiographical accounts, what stopped Wonhyo from pursuing this opportunity to go to the Tang was a major awakening experience.

As the story goes, when Wonhyo and Uisang arrived at their port of embarkation, their ship's departure was delayed by inclement weather. Caught in the rain and without a place to stay, they took shelter for the night in a nearby cave, where they found gourds from which to drink, and so were able to get a decent night's sleep. It was only at the first light of dawn that they realized that the cave in which they stayed was actually a tomb, and that the "gourds" from which they had drunk were human skulls. The storm continued, and their departure was delayed for another day, such that they were forced to spend another night in the same cave. During their second night in the cave they were unable to sleep, being plagued by ghosts and nightmares. As Wonhyo reflected on this experience, he suddenly became deeply aware of the extent to which his perception of the world was based on the condition of his own mind. He experienced a great awakening to the principle of Consciousness-only, after which he decided that there was, after all, no need to go to China in search of the Dharma. He characterized his experience thus: "Because of the arising of thought, various phenomena arise; when thought ceases, a cave and a grave are not two" (心生故種種法生, 心滅故龕墳不二).[8]

And so Wonhyo said: "Since there are no dharmas outside of the mind, why should I seek them somewhere? I will not go to the Tang."[9] As the content of his awakening, Wonhyo saw that since there was nothing outside of his own mind, there was nothing special for him to seek in China, and he returned home to Silla. After having an affair with the princess Yoseok, Wonhyo returned to the secular life, taking up the name "Layman of Minor Lineage." He is said to have subsequently devoted all of his energies to the spreading of Buddhism to the common people.

During this period Wonhyo led an unstructured lifestyle. While carrying out extensive commentarial work and delivering lectures, he at the same time frequented bars and brothels, playing the lute here and there, sleeping in mausoleums and in the homes of the common people. At other times he engaged in seated meditation in the mountains or along riversides, according to the inclinations of his own mind. It is also said that the masses came to know

how to gain the invisible aid of the Buddha by chanting his name through Wonhyo's teachings. Wonhyo died suddenly in at the age of 70 in the third lunar month of 686 at Hyeolsa 穴寺. His son Seol Chong brought his remains to Bunhwangsa (the temple with which Wonhyo had been primarily associated during his career), where he made a clay image and interred his ashes.

WONHYO'S WRITINGS

Wonhyo was an extremely prolific writer, recorded as having composed over 200 fascicles in more than eighty works. Among these, twenty-two are extant either in full or fragmentarily.[10]

A glance at the list of Wonhyo's extant writings readily shows the breadth of his interests and doctrinal mastery, as he explicated almost all of the most important texts from the major Mahāyāna traditions being studied in China at the time, with the exception of Esoteric Buddhist treatises. Doctrinal traditions covered in his works include Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā), Three Treatise (Madhyamaka), *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, Tathāgatagarbha, *Lotus Sūtra*, Vinaya, Pure Land, Yogācāra, State Protection, Huayan, and Buddhist Logic. Wonhyo conducted extensive research on all of the major Mahāyāna scriptures and treatises of the time, along with their associated doctrines, with his own work advancing these studies significantly. There is no other major scholar in China, Korea, or Japan prior to the modern era who exhibited such a combination of range and prolific exegetical mastery of the Mahāyāna tradition.

WONHYO'S THOUGHT

Unaffiliated with any particular school or doctrinal tradition, Wonhyo applied himself to the explication of all the major Mahāyāna source texts that were available at the time, and in doing so had a major impact on East Asian Buddhism. He is cited extensively, and his interpretations of the texts from this broad range of traditions are taken seriously in subsequent commentarial works in China, Korea, and Japan. The key terms that have been applied in modern times to characterize his overall approach as seen in his writings are those of "harmonization of disputes" (*hwajaeng* 和諍) and interpenetrated Buddhism (*tong bulgyo* 通佛教).

DOCTRINAL HARMONIZATION (*HWAJAENG*)

As a methodological approach, harmonization of disputes refers to Wonhyo's relentless pursuit of ostensibly variant or conflicting Buddhist doctrinal or hermeneutical positions. He investigates them exhaustively until he can identify the precise point at which their variance occurs, and then shows how differences in fundamental background, motivation, or sectarian bias on the part of the proponent of that particular position led to the production of that scholar's own position, which stands in conflict with those of other scholars. Wonhyo engages in this exercise repeatedly, in every extant commentary, in every essay and treatise – to an extent not seen in the works of any other East Asian exegete. In this manner, his approach differs considerably from most of the major contemporary scriptural commentators in China, in that in his works we do not see the application of the practice of doctrinal classification (K. *pangyo*; Ch. *panjiao* 判教).

One of the most concentrated and sustained examples of Wonhyo's ecumenical approach can be seen in his *Ten Approaches to the Reconciliation of Doctrinal Disputes* (*Simmun hwajaeng non* 十門和諍論),[11] for which we unfortunately only have fragments from the beginning portion. This is one of Wonhyo's very few works that is not a commentary, and it is not composed for the purpose of resolving a singular doctrinal theme. It is rather a methodological exercise that selectively utilizes Mādhyamika, Dignāgan, and essence-function logic, interwoven with the motifs of the major Mahāyāna scriptures, including the *Lotus Sūtra*, *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*, *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, and so on. As in his other writings, Wonhyo's aim is to work through ostensibly conflicting doctrinal problems using rigorous logic to clarify their content, reveal their underpinnings, and ultimately demonstrate their commensurability with the Mahāyāna Buddhist system as a whole. At the same time, while fully investigating all the disputes and pending issues that appeared between schools and their scriptures and treatises – as well as differences in current trends of thought – Wonhyo used the discussion of these variant positions to establish his own position.[12] Wonhyo's overriding concern with the harmonization of disputes is seen not only in this text, but pervades every nook and cranny of his extant writings.

The debates, controversies, and minor differences in interpretation that Wonhyo took up for treatment in his commentaries vary widely from text to text. On one level, when Wonhyo wrote an exegesis on a text, he usually attempted to resolve disagreements in interpretation seen in prior commentaries, often among members of that text's own commentarial tradition. In this type of situation, Wonhyo often comes to the argument as a relative outsider and will make his judgments based on the agreement or not of the arguments with general Mahāyāna principles, principles of logical argumentation, and/or scriptural authority. His commentaries on a given text might also take up the positions of that work *vis-à-vis* other competing or slightly differing doctrinal streams of the time. Wonhyo also had a penchant for testing the distinctive doctrines of a given scriptural tradition in relation to general Mahāyāna principles of doctrine and argumentation. For example, in his commentaries on Pure Land scriptures, he wonders how the notion of achieving rebirth in the Pure Land based on a mere ten repetitions of Amitābha's name can be reconciled with the path of attainment of buddhahood requiring three incalculable eons in the Yogācāra system – or how the *Lotus Sūtra*'s understanding of the relationship of the one and three vehicles matches up with that of the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra* (Discourse Explaining the Thought) and other scriptures. For Wonhyo, Yogācāra quite often ends up being the test bed against which idiosyncratic doctrines are treated – no doubt because it is within Yogācāra where the doctrinal mechanisms of theory and practice are worked out in the greatest logical and systematic detail.

YOGĀCĀRA AND BUDDHA NATURE (TATHĀGATAGARBHA)

Although, as indicated above, Wonhyo was given to investigate a vast range of discrepancies in doctrinal positions both large and small, there was one overarching controversy in East Asia that had reached its peak at his time and that came to the forefront of his own work, no doubt exerting an influence on the choice of the texts he explicated and the content of such exegeses. This was the tension between the two differing, yet much-overlapping, doctrinal streams of Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha that dominated the Buddhological

discourse of East Asia for several centuries. As is well documented, the Tathāgatagarbha (Buddha-nature) tradition had taken strong hold in various forms in East Asia during the fifth and sixth centuries, to the extent that it had even influenced the interpretations of Yogācāra doctrine that came to be promoted in East Asia during this period. The new translations of Yogācāra texts produced by Xuanzang and his colleagues brought with them a powerful challenge to the understanding of the Tathāgatagarbha stream, positing a mental condition of karmic moral neutrality in the deepest layer of mind, articulated in detailed arguments contained in the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*, the *Saṃdhinirmocana-sutra*, *Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論 (Treatise on Consciousness Only), and other influential works. Wonhyo was just coming into his own as a scholar when these new translations began to make their way to the Korean peninsula. Reflecting his generally open-minded and nonsectarian attitude, while he had no doubt already had been firmly grounded in the Tathāgatagarbha approach, he read the new Yogācāra texts in earnest. He studied and wrote commentaries on all of them, and he used them (especially the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*) as background references for his commentaries on a broad range of traditions, ranging far beyond Yogācāra proper. Thus, while in the final analysis Wonhyo's personal religious convictions never departed from the Buddha-nature-based faith in which they were rooted, Wonhyo deeply embraced the incoming new corpus of Yogācāra materials, understanding the way in which they filled a vast lacuna in explaining the functions of the mind. In his simultaneous acceptance of both strands of thought to this degree, Wonhyo is unique among scholarly exegetes of his stature, as all the other major figures of his era – represented by Fazang 法藏 (643–712) and Kuiji 窺基 (632–82) on both sides of the spectrum – tended to place strong precedence on one system or the other, to the point that their writings usually deliberately refuted, or at least devalorized, the other, often through relegation in status in a doctrinal classification scheme.

While Wonhyo clearly perceived the differences between the two systems (in fact, he articulated the differences more clearly and extensively than any other scholar, as we will see below), his unusual ability to see any given argument issue through the eyes of its proponent led him to see the two in a complementary and overlapping fashion, rather than as entirely incommensurate. A major point of departure for the development of this perspective is the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* (hereafter *AMF*) – a text that was clearly one of his favorites, and upon which he wrote some of the most influential of his commentaries. The *AMF* was a work that had attempted to forge an amalgamated discourse derived from both traditions by working key concepts from both into a single system. In the course of his commentarial work on the *AMF* Wonhyo uncovered a critical and telling touchstone for defining the relationship between Tathāgatagarbha and Yogācāra in the notion of the "two hindrances" – the afflictive and cognitive hindrances (Skt. *kleśāvaraṇa*, *jñeyāvaraṇa*). Investigating the notions of affliction and nescience – along with their removal – at length throughout the entire Mahāyāna scriptural tradition, Wonhyo composed a treatise in which he analyzed, systematized, and compared these vitally important Buddhist notions from the perspectives of the Yogācāra and Tathāgatagarbha traditions. This work, one of his most important philosophical investigations, was entitled the *System of the Two Hindrances* (K. *Ijangui* 二障義; trans. Muller and Nguyen 2012). Through this work Wonhyo treated the relationship between these two predominating strands in religious thought with a depth and balance unequalled before or since his time.

WONHYO'S WRITINGS: LOGIC AND
MODES OF INQUIRY

Aside from his level of mastery of the Mahāyāna system and his remarkable ability to see an issue from a variety of perspectives, there is no doubt that some part of Wonhyo's success as a Buddhist scholar can be attributed to his writing skills. His classical Chinese writing ability is simply superb – on a par with any of the great Chinese scholars of the period. His writing in classical Chinese is not only good technically and grammatically, but also has a literary flourish, tempo, and playfulness to a degree that was probably never equaled in Korea. The differences become readily apparent when one begins to read the works of his Silla contemporaries: after Wonhyo, the level drops off, and in some cases significantly. The accuracy of his textual citations is also noticeable – something that we can readily verify in the age of digitized canons. Once one has worked with a broad enough cross-section of East Asian Buddhist scholars of the period, one becomes used to finding that it is not unusual for exegetes to have the name of the original text wrong half the time; or to cite a passage that we cannot find in the indicated text; or that it is there, but the paraphrase is so far off that it is difficult to find the source. With Wonhyo, the cited text name is almost always right, and the passage cited is usually exactly the same or quite close, except for cases when he is deliberately abbreviating the citation. In short, in terms of technical scholarly discipline, Wonhyo was top-shelf.

Wonhyo's writing exhibits a few readily distinguishable modes of prose and poetic style. These are sometimes applied with a particular philosophical influence or a distinctive type of hermeneutic or discursive approach, of which several intertwining types can be identified. One of the first forms that can be discerned in his writings is a lyrical mode that emulates Daoist style, most notably as seen in the *Daode jing* (道德經). This mode, especially prevalent in the prolegomena of his works, serves mainly to vividly express and praise the attributes of the Dharma, the Great Vehicle, awakening, and so forth. Such language is powerful in its ability to describe something wondrous and inconceivable, but is rarely applied in the articulation of any specific doctrinal position. The verses that constitute the prolegomena to Wonhyo's commentaries are invariably accompanied by or blended with an exercise in inconceivability, using examples of space, time, and so on, as can be seen, for example, in the prolegomenon to his commentary on the *Flower Ornament Sutra* (*Avataṃsaka Sūtra*; Ch. *Huayan jing* 華嚴經).

> Now, in the unhindered and unobstructed Dharma-opening of the Dharma-realm there is no Dharma, and yet no non-Dharma; no opening, and yet no non-opening. Thus it is neither large nor small, neither in a hurry nor taking its time; neither moving nor still, neither one nor many. Not large, it can become an atom, leaving nothing behind. Not small, it can contain all of space, with room left over. Unhurried, it can include all the ages (*kalpa*) in the three time periods; not taking its time, it can enter fully into an instant. Neither moving nor still, cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*) is *nirvāṇa* and *nirvāṇa* is cyclic existence. Neither one nor many, one dharma is all dharmas and all dharmas are one dharma.
>
> (HBJ 1.495a6–10)

This passage is also useful for introducing Wonhyo's oft-used rhetorical strategy of "opening and combining" (*gae-hap*) – a literary practice that is reminiscent of the Chan literary trope of "rolling out and taking back up." This method, which works toward the

disallowing of attachment to a given position, is identified by many scholars as being central to Wonhyo's project. Bak Jonghong characterizes it as:

> 'Open' (開; *gae*) opens up to the reader the vast numbers of different ideas presented in a text, while 'combine' (合; *hap*) provides a synthetic perspective that can reveal how those various ideas complement one another. When both the hermeneutics of opening and combining hermeneutics are applied simultaneously in the explication of a text, one is free to advocate certain positions and to critique others. One can open up for analysis different viewpoints without creating unnecessary complications, as well as combine those viewpoints into a single overriding perspective without creating untoward parochialism. Put another way, treating a text either analytically or synthetically neither adds anything to it nor takes anything away. Hence, one may advocate something without gaining anything, or critique something else without losing anything.
>
> (Bak 1991: 49–50; slightly modified from Robert Buswell's original translation)

Another prominent form of discourse utilized by Wonhyo is a paradoxical logic reflecting the flavor of the Perfection of Wisdom texts, which goes something like: "Since there is nothing that is shown, there is nothing that is not shown. Since there is nothing to attain, there is nothing that is not attained" (*Doctrinal Essentials of the Great Perfection of Wisdom Sūtra*; HBJ 1.480a16–17; T 1697.33.68c4–5). In this case, rather than taking a point to the limit of its logical extension, as in the Daoistic mode discussed above, Wonhyo makes a series of paradoxical statements that reflect an understanding of the logic of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). This mode often ends up being indistinguishable from another favorite approach, the apophatic "negation of negation" as seen in Mādhyamika logic and used throughout Wonhyo's writings. At the same time it should be noted that this is, like his other rhetorical strategies, not something to which he adheres exclusively. Mixed in with these borrowings from classical Chinese and Indian Buddhist modes of discourse are East Asian approaches, such as a reliance on the paradigm of essence-function (*ti-yong* 體用). Wonhyo moves seamlessly among these modes, combining them to execute the detailed arguments that ultimately assert the integrity of the Mahāyāna system.

TWO TRUTHS

Closely associated with Perfection of Wisdom-type thinking is the ubiquitous presence of the two truths (conventional and ultimate) as a hermeneutical device throughout Wonhyo's work. We can find the two truths applied virtually everywhere in his writing. For example, it is often stated that one scholar's position can be seen as holding true from an absolute (K. *jin* 眞) perspective, while the other can be seen as holding true from a conventional (K. *sok* 俗) perspective. Equally visible in this respect are the various analogs of the two truths, such as emptiness and existence, the conditioned and the unconditioned, etc.

In acknowledging the extent of his application of the two truths, one could say that Wonhyo is following a general Buddhist approach that is explicitly articulated in Madhyamaka, being subsequently applied by numerous influential thinkers from various schools. What is distinctive about Wonhyo is the extent of his unceasing emphasis on the mutual containment of the two truths – their not being two yet not being one. Furthermore, the two truths simultaneously play the role of hermeneutic tool with which one deals with the text as object, while at the same time serving as a type of personal (meditative) exercise

for undoing the habituated tendencies of one's own consciousness – the tendency to instantaneously and unconsciously move in the conceptual directions of reification or annihilation. For Wonhyo, the act of scriptural exegesis and one's engagement in one's own personal efforts toward breaking the habituation of constructing and maintaining dualisms are not two separate things. Thus, he seems to believe that these categories, applied flexibly, and pushed to their limits, can go just about the whole way in explaining the contradictions to be seen in Buddhist discourse, without needing to take the step of placing texts, theories, and doctrines into pigeonholes, *à la* doctrinal classification (*panjiao*).

Thus, lurking in the background of this entire discussion is the basic Buddhist problem of attachment (*grāha*; K. *jip* 執) – to any kind of rigid position, whether it be the conventional or the real, existence or emptiness, etc. Attachment, typically carried out in adherence to the extremes of reification and nihilism, is the key object of criticism in Wonhyo's Vinaya commentaries, where he argues repeatedly that the most important point is not to reify the precepts, but to be able to flexibly judge morality according to the proper context. Related in application are several other binaries that are regularly employed hermeneutic categories for Wonhyo, equally serving to maintain fluidity of interpretive perspective: these are the categories of specific (K. *byeol* 別) and general (K. *chong* 総 or *tong* 通), as well as fine (K. *se* 細) and coarse (K. *chu* 麁). Quite often a given theory is seen as being acceptable in a general sense, but not in specific situations, and vice versa.

One of the best examples of Wonhyo's usage of the two truths in an exercise of nonattachment to extremes is found in his preface to the *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*:

> Now, the fount of the One Mind is free from existence and non-existence and is entirely pure. The ocean of the three [levels of apprehension of] emptiness[13] merges the absolute and conventional and is perfectly calm. While calmly fusing two, it is not one. Entirely pure, it is free from extremes, but does not lie in the center. Not lying in the center, yet free from extremes, non-existent dharmas do not abide in non-existence, and marks that are not non-existent do not abide in existence.
>
> Since it is not one yet merges dualities, non-absolute phenomena are not originally conventional, and the non-conventional principle is not originally absolute. Since it merges dualities and yet is not one, there is nothing that the natures of the absolute and conventional do not establish, and there are no marks of purity and pollution not contained within. Since it is free from extremes, yet not in the center, there are no existent or non-existent dharmas that are not created, and no positive or negative implications that are not subsumed.
>
> Accordingly, without refutation, there is nothing not refuted; without positing, there is nothing not posited. We can call it the ultimate principle of no-principle, the great being-so of not being-so. This is the general message of this *sūtra*.
>
> (HBJ 1.604b7–20)

The principle of the two truths is probably the most fundamental and extensively used hermeneutic structure throughout Wonhyo's works, applied in a way that emphasizes the importance of the maintenance of an attitude that allows for fluid shifting back and forth between the truths, as well as their analogs, such as conditioned/unconditioned, existence/emptiness, and the One Mind that always includes both aspects without being two and without being one.

But lest we oversimplify: the matter of technique and approach in the application of this basic principle is not related simply to a skillful application of the paradigm of the two truths alone. There are, in Wonhyo, many things involved in being able to reconcile doctrinal disagreements, not the least of which is a basic level of mastery of the doctrines that allows him to fully apprehend what the proponents of various positions are trying to say. Wonhyo possessed an unusual grasp of the major scriptures and treatises from all of the Mahāyāna traditions represented in East Asia and was able to readily bring to mind and cite a passage from anywhere within the Mahāyāna canon to support or refute a certain position.

LOGIC

Finally, Wonhyo is distinguished by being one of the earliest Buddhist scholars in East Asia to attempt to grapple with Buddhist logic and seriously apply its principles. Logic (Skt. *hetuvidyā*) was a new and interesting tool that had been introduced by Xuanzang as part of his translation project, and Wonhyo was quick to see its usefulness as a standard for evaluating the relative strengths and weaknesses of competing arguments. Not only did he extensively apply logic categories and terminology in his exegetical works and treatises – he also wrote his own commentaries on some of the newly translated works on logic.[14]

NONCONCEPTUAL FAITH AS THE
FINAL DESTINATION

Our present brief introduction to the life and works of Wonhyo would be incomplete if it did not fully clarify the fact that Wonhyo's discourse, along with its strong roots in precise philosophical argumentation through the principles in logic – grounded in an unusually broad and deep mastery of the canon – also has a distinctly religio-mystical dimension. While the defense of a specific doctrinal tradition or tenet is obviously not the most important thing for Wonhyo, it is further the case that in the end he is not merely a philosopher, dialectician, exegete, or master of the doctrine. His ultimate purpose in resolving doctrinal disputes is a religious one – aimed eventually at the arrival at the state of deep faith as described most completely in the *AMF*.

That deepest form of faith is a state of mind that linguistic argumentation cannot lay hold of, a state where words cannot gain any traction. Yet, in line with the fluidity of the One Mind expressed continuously throughout his writings, that state of faith in which the attachment to language is broken off can be utilized as a position that allows the exegete to see beyond the differences in the positions of the various participants in doctrinal argumentation, to see their underpinnings. Thus, the ability to be in a state wherein one is disconnected from words, while being its own end, can also serve as an exegetical standpoint from which reconciliation of disputes is more readily possible.

And while we can, from the perspective of logical argumentation, assert that the overriding aim of all the modes of Wonhyo's discourse described above is that of "reconciliation of disputes," this is still only the penultimate goal of Wonhyo's efforts. His final purpose, even as a scholarly commentator, is *religious*, rather than philosophical or doctrinal. Thus, his intent in validating the *sūtra*s of various traditions through his exegesis is to allow each one of them to serve as the best possible guide to Buddhist salvation. He often laments, in the closing portions of his works, or in the closing sections of arguments, the futility of approaching the truth through language, and thus admonishes himself and his

readers to recognize that the only real recourse is to gain a firm footing in the domain of the non-conceptual. As can be seen in his *Doctrinal Essentials of the Sutra of Immeasurable Life* (*Muryangsu gyeong jong-yo*), this nonconceptual experience is none other than the experience of absolute faith itself.

> The incomparable, unequaled, supreme cognitive faculty[15] is established in order to overcome both these barriers – the doubt [about the possibility of omniscience] and the problem [of whether its attainment is sudden or gradual]. Therefore I want to clarify that this mirror-like cognitive faculty surpasses the other three kinds of cognitive faculties – there is nothing like it. Outside the two truths one resides independently, in non-duality. Both barriers and their two external expressions transcend the barrierless. One should just have faith, because it cannot be apprehended through reason. Therefore it is called the incomparable, unequalled, supreme cognitive faculty.
>
> (HBJ 1.562a6–10)

Or,

> [S]ince there is nothing to be seen, there is nothing that [the incomparable, unequaled, supreme cognition] doesn't see. In this way it corrects the fourth doubt. If you are unable to grasp the point, it is like words grasping meanings – limited and limitless – none escape error. It is indeed precisely based on the approach that denies a limit that one provisionally posits limitlessness. If one is unable to resolve these four doubts, even if one manages to be born in that [pure] land, one resides only at its outer edges. If there is someone like this, even if he is unable to understand the world of the prior four cognitive faculties, but is able to humbly yield even though his mind's eye is not yet opened, and with faith, think only of the Buddha (Tathāgata) with wholehearted submission, this kind of person, according to his level of practice, will be born in that land, and not reside at its outer edges.
>
> (HBJ 1.562a24–562b8)

This same point is made frequently in various forms in Wonhyo's commentaries on the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith* and **Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*. In the closing passage of the *System of the Two Hindrances*, Wonhyo says:

> Yet these sentient beings, as well as all dharmas, are not really persons or dharmas in the commonly understood sense of the word, nor are they nonexistent. I am offering this explanation, yet the truth of the two hindrances can be fathomed only by the enlightened ones. [We sentient beings] should consider it relying on pious faith.
>
> (HBJ 1.814b18–20)

Finally, as Wonhyo says in his oft-cited preface to his *Commentary on the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*:

> Who, besides Vimalakīrti or the One-glance Gentleman,[16] can discuss the Great Vehicle without language, and produce profound faith in the state of severance of thought?
>
> (HBJ 1.698b13–14)

ABBREVIATIONS

HBJ = *Hanguk bulgyo jeonseo.* 韓國佛教全書 [The Collected Works of Korean Buddhism] (1984). Seoul: Dongguk University Press.

T = *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō.* [Japanese Edition of the Buddhist Canon] (1924–35). Tokyo: Daizō kyōkai. (Electronic Texts from SAT and CBETA used as sources).

XZJ = *Xuzangjing.* 續藏經. Taiwanese Reprint of *Zokuzōkyō.* [*Dai nihon zokuzōkyō*] (1905–12). Kyoto: Zokyō shoin. (Electronic Text from CBETA used as source).

NOTES

1 However, the labeling of Wonhyo as a Huayan "patriarch" that can be seen in classical biographical works – a characterization regularly repeated in modern Korean Buddhist scholarship – is actually difficult to support, given that Wonhyo himself was never affiliated with any specific school, as well as the fact that only a very small portion of his extant writings demonstrates any special Huayan leanings or influence.

2 The most complete among these fragmentary accounts is that found on the *Goseonsa Seodang Hwasang tapbi* (Stūpa of the Reverend Seodang [Wonhyo] from Goseon Temple 高仙寺誓幢和尚塔碑), a stone monument on which was written a short biographical sketch of Wonhyo. The upper and lower parts, which had been broken off from each other, were discovered separately in different locations. Other significant partial accounts of his life include: (1) *Wonhyo bulgi* (Wonhyo the Unbridled 元曉不羈), contained in the *Samguk yusa* 三國遺事 (HBJ 6.347b17–348b19). (2) The *Silla guk Hwangyongsa Wonhyo jeon* (*Biography of Wonhyo of Hwangyongsa in the Tang Dominion of Silla* 唐新羅國黃龍寺元曉傳). (3) The *Dang Silla guk Uisang jeon* (*Biography of Uisang from the Tang Dominion of Silla* 唐新羅國義湘傳) in the *Song gaoseng zhuan* (Song Biographies of Eminent Monks; T 2106.50.730a6–b29). (4) The *Wonhyo guksa jeon* (*Biography of National Preceptor Wonhyo* 元曉國師傳) in the *Dongsa yeoljeon* (*Biographies of Eastern Masters* 東師列傳; HBJ 10.996b13–c16). Fragmentary accounts of Wonhyo's life can be also found in the *Zongjing lu* (*Record of the Axiom Mirror* 宗鏡錄; T 2016.48.477a22–28). *Linjian lu* (*Record of the Forest* 林間錄; XZJ 148.590a2–9) in the *Uisang jeongyo* (*Uisang's Life and Teachings* 義湘傳教; HBJ 6.348b20–349c22) and the *Sabok bureon* (Snake Boy Doesn't Talk 蛇福不言) from the *Samguk yusa* (HBJ 6.349b23–350a19). Biographical data for the study of the life of Wonhyo was compiled by Gim Yeongtae 金煐泰 in his *Wonhyo yeon-gu saryo chongnok* (Wonhyo hak yeonuwon, Janggyeonggak, 1996). In this book Prof. Gim assembled all the material related in whole or part to material on the life of Wonhyo, arranged in detailed tables.

3 There is only one extant concrete account of Wonhyo's year of entry into the Buddhist order, which is found in the biography of Wonhyo contained in the *Song Version of the Biographies of Eminent Monks* (宋高僧傳). There it says he entered into the saṃgha in the "year of *guancai*," which means something like "putting up the hair" or "braiding the hair" i.e., a kind of coming of age ritual, usually around 16 (or 15 Western age). (T 2106.50.730a7–8.)

4 *Samguk yusa Nangji Seung-un Bohyeon su* 朗智乘雲普賢樹.

5 *Samguk yusa Yihye dongjin* 二惠同塵.

6 *Samguk yusa*, *Bojangbongno Bodeok iam* 寶藏奉老普德移庵.

7 The reference to Wonhyo's specific interest in studying Yogācāra is found in the biographical sketch contained in the *Song gaoseng zhuan* at T 2061.50.730a11–12. "He went with Uisang to [study in] the Tang, as he yearned for the teachings of the Tripiṭakas Xuanzang and Kuiji."

8 This story is found in Uisang's biography, starting on T 2061.50.729a3. This line is a paraphrase of the verse in the *Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith*, which says that when a thought arises, all dharmas arise, and when a thought ceases, all dharmas disappear. T 1666.32.577b22.

9 「心外無法 胡用別求 我不入唐」*Song gaoseng zhuan* Biography of Uisang, T 2061.50.729a3.

10   The number twenty-two is based on the number of titles listed in the first volume of the HBJ. If we take into consideration that the *Combined Version of the Commentaries on the Awakening of Faith* contained therein is actually constituted by two works, then we can count twenty-three extant works. For the full list of these extant works, see the entry on Wonhyo in the *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* (http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb).

11   HBJ 1.838a–840c. A translation of this text by Cuong T. Nguyen is available in *Wonhyo's Philosophy of Mind*. A translation by Charles Muller is available on his web site at http://www.acmuller.net/kor-bud/simmun_hwajaeng_non.html.

12   Since the *Simmun hwajaeng non* only exists in fragments, we do not know the full list of ten topics that he treated, but the table of contents has been reconstructed based on various citations in other works. The suggested items for the table of contents (with items 4–10 being hypothetical) are: (1) the various arguments about three vehicles and One Vehicle; (2) various attachments to existence and emptiness; (3) various attachments to self and phenomena; (4) various doctrines of the three natures; (4) various doctrines of the five natures; (5) becoming Buddha; (6) various doctrines of the two hindrances; (7) various doctrines on *nirvāṇa*; (8) various doctrines of Buddha bodies; (9) various doctrines of Buddha nature; (10) various attachments to the real and the mundane.

13   As described in the **Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*: emptiness of marks, emptiness of emptiness, emptiness of that which is empty. See T 273.9.369b5.

14   Unfortunately, only fragments of one of his works on logic are extant, but a sufficient portion of this text remains for a reader to get a sense of how Wonhyo understood Buddhist logic. This is the *Pan biryang non*, translated with an authoritative introduction by Dan Lusthaus in *Wonhyo's Philosophy of Mind*.

15   Identified in this text by Wonhyo as the equivalent of the Yogācāra "mirror-cognition."

16   A reference to Confucius and Wenbo Xuezi, who, according to the *Zhuangzi*, did not say anything to each other when they met, even though Confucius had wanted to meet Wenbo for a long time. When Confucius was asked the reason by his disciple Zilu, he replied: "With that kind of man, once glance tells you that the Way is there before you. What room does that leave for the possibility of speech?" This discussion occurs in Chapter 21 *Tian Zi-fang*. See Burton Watson, trans., *The Complete Works of Chuang-tzu* (NY: Columbia University Press), p. 223.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

DŌGEN

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Steven Heine

INTRODUCTION

Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253, also known as Eihei Dōgen 永平道元), the founder of the Sōtō Zen sect 曹洞禅宗, was one of the most influential Japanese Buddhist thinkers and commentators on *kōan*s 公案, or enigmatic Zen encounter dialogues. He has had an enduring influence on all of East Asian Buddhist history since the thirteenth century. Dōgen's work today is especially important in the writings of the Kyoto School and other exponents of contemporary comparative philosophy of religion as conducted in Japan and throughout the world. He lived at the beginning of the Kamakura era (1185–1333), which was marked by a dramatic transition from the dominance of the Tendai 天台 sect to the emergence of many new forms of Buddhist practice, including several sects of Zen meditation leading to enlightenment,[1] Pure Land veneration of the salvific power of Amida Buddha, and Nichiren's 日蓮 (1222–82) celebration of the efficacy of the *Lotus Sutra*, among other reform movements. Dōgen played a crucial role in the establishment of Sōtō Zen as the single largest and most widespread of the new sects. This development was based on following models of training he learned while attaining enlightenment in China during a visit that lasted from 1223 to 1227, although subsequent leaders of the sect, especially Keizan Jōkin 瑩山紹瑾 (1268–1325), assimilated many elements of indigenous and hybrid popular religiosity to facilitate the tradition's spread in the provinces outside of Kyoto, which was the primary location of the Rinzai Zen sect 臨済禅宗.

Dōgen was especially articulate and creative in appropriating Chinese Zen writings found in a variety of transmissions of the lamp records and *kōan* collections that were formed in the Song dynasty (960–1279) by adapting these works through the innovative if idiosyncratic use of Japanese readings, which sometimes deliberately distort the grammatical structure of the source texts for philosophical purposes. Some of Dōgen's main ideas include the view that philosophy of religion must be based on intense personal realization and ongoing meditative practice rooted in the notion of the universal spirituality of buddha-nature (仏性 *busshō*) encompassing all beings without partiality, exception, or division. He maintains that enlightenment is not to be seen as a goal attained in the far-off future but, rather, an immediate manifestation realized each and every moment in the here-and-now occasions of everyday experience that reflect the ultimate reality of buddha-nature. Dōgen

further argues that language is not a distortion or distraction but a necessary and imaginative tool for expressing the subtleties and nuances of the enlightenment experience.

The single main element in Dōgen's unique approach to Buddhist theory and practice is his emphasis on the meaning of impermanence (*mujō* 無常) reached through profound personal understanding as the basis for Buddhist metaphysics. The notion of impermanence, or the transiency of all aspects of human and natural existence, has always been a fundamental feature of Buddhist teaching in regard to the insubstantial, selfless nature of reality. However, Dogen repeatedly cautions against any subtle tendency to view nirvana or the universal buddha-nature as an eternal realm separable from or independent of impermanence. Instead, he stresses that a full, unimpeded, and perpetually renewed experience of evanescence attained through the unity of being-time (*uji* 有時) is the touchstone and framework of every aspect of Buddhist meditative training and spiritual realization. Other key doctrines related to this are the spontaneous here-and-now manifestation of Zen enlightenment (*genjōkōan* 現成公案), the eternal moment of meditation (*gyōji no ima* 行持の今), the immediacy of awakening (*nikon* 而今), and impermanence-Buddha-nature (*mujō-busshō* 無常仏性).

DŌGEN'S LIFE

Both traditional followers and modern scholars reconstruct Dōgen's life from a variety of autobiographical and biographical sources. As pre-modern hagiographical and quasi-historical materials, these sources are generally unreliable but nevertheless helpful for constructing an image of the fiercely determined and engagingly dynamic Zen teacher who taught at a critical moment in Japanese religious and social history that was increasingly dependent on importing literary culture from China. Autobiographical sources include occasional references in Dōgen's writings to his particular experiences and perspectives. These appear, for example, in the *Hōkyōki* (*Record for the Hōkyō Era*), which contains about fifty dialogues he held with Chinese mentor Rujing 如淨 (1162–1228) during his visit to China in the 1220s, and in the *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* (*Collection of Miscellaneous Talks*), which consists of evening sermons that were given a decade later to recruit converts to his fledgling sect in the early days of his preaching in Kyoto. While many of these references are piecemeal and disconnected, a variety of sectarian biographies attempt to document Dōgen's full life story in sequential fashion. The main example is a biographical text known as the *Kenzeiki* 建撕記 (*Record of Monk Kenzei*), which was written in 1472 by Kenzei, who was then abbot of Eiheiji 永平寺, the temple Dōgen founded in the remote mountains north of Kyoto in the 1240s. The *Kenzeiki* was later revised and annotated in the eighteenth century as the *Teiho Kenzeiki* (1753) by the eminent but eclectic Sōtō scholiast Menzan Zuihō 面山瑞方 (1683–1769), and this version was used as the basis for a series of about sixty prints produced in 1803 as well as a recent (2009) film biography of Dōgen titled *Zen*, which gained worldwide release.

Much of Dōgen's emphasis on impermanence is based on his own personal experiences as recorded in various writings. Although many of the details of these records have been called into question by recent historiographical studies, the symbolism of the main events is still important for understanding the meaning of his philosophy of Zen. According to the traditional accounts, Dōgen was born into an aristocratic family at a time when Japan was beginning to be plagued by repeated civil warfare. Dōgen experienced profound sorrow and tragedy at an early age – his father died when he was two, and his beautiful mother, a

mistress of the father, died when he was seven. It is said that when Dōgen saw the smoke from incense rising and vanishing during his mother's funeral, he was deeply moved by an awareness of the inevitability of death and pervasiveness of ephemerality.

The orphaned Dōgen had the opportunity through members of his noble family to be trained for a career in the prestigious Japanese Court system. However, he decided to renounce secular life in pursuit of the Buddhist Dharma. At first, he studied on Mt. Hiei outside the capital city of Kyoto in the dominant Japanese Tendai church, in which the central doctrine was an affirmation of "original enlightenment" (*hongaku* 本覚), or the inherent potentiality of all beings to attain the universal, primordial buddha-nature. At the age of thirteen Dōgen had a fundamental "doubt" about the doctrine of original enlightenment: If everyone is already enlightened in that they possess the buddha-nature, he wondered, then what is the need for sustained meditative practice as required by the Buddha's teaching?

Unable to resolve this doubt in Japan, Dōgen traveled to China, where the contemplative path of Zen had become the dominant sect since the late tenth century. At first, Dōgen was disappointed in the laxity of the monastic behavior on the part of Chinese Zen monks of the Rinzai sect, who failed to inspire him to resolve his doubt. Then, on the verge of returning to Japan unfulfilled, he met the Sōtō teacher, Rujing, who insisted on an unrelenting approach to meditation. Under the guidance of his new mentor, Dōgen attained an awakening experience referred to as the "casting off of body-mind" (*shinjin datsuraku* 身心脱落), or a continuing process of liberation from all intellectual and volitional attachments, which signified the resolution of his doubt about the necessity of sustained practice.

Once he returned to Japan, Dōgen founded the Sōto sect in the Kyoto area, where his Kōshōji temple thrived and gained numerous followers. This monastery was the location for the composition of his first main body of writing, the *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼蔵 (*Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*), widely considered one of the masterpieces of world religious literature. However, in the early 1240s, probably because of sectarian disputes with Tendai and other Zen factions, although the exact causes are never specifically mentioned in his writings, Dōgen moved with the support of samurai patron Hatano Yoshishige to the pristine mountains of Echizen (now Fukui) Province, where he established Eiheiji temple as the center of the Sōtō sect. It was there that his second main text, the *Eihei Kōroku* 永平広録 (*Record of Eihei Dōgen*), was created along with other writings emphasizing the importance of strict monastic training. A couple of years after a six-month visit at the request of the shogun to the temporary capital of Kamakura, where he declined the offer to head an impressive new temple (Kenchōji) then under construction, Dōgen fell ill in 1252 and died a year later in Kyoto, where he had returned to seek medical guidance.

DŌGEN'S WRITINGS

Dōgen was an extremely thoughtful and creative composer of Zen Buddhist sermons, commentaries, essays, journals, letters, and poetry, which have been studied and commented on extensively by scholars both within and outside of the Sōtō Zen sect. His writings are listed among the classics of Japanese culture and are continually being interpreted by contemporary Buddhist thinkers and comparative philosophers.

The *Shōbogenzō*, which is mainly a collection of informal sermons composed and delivered in the abbot's quarters during Dōgen's years of teaching at Kōshōji temple in Kyoto, was long kept as a kind of secret or hidden text by the sect, which did not want to see it subjected to interpretation by representatives of rival Buddhist factions. Today, it is

widely known and admired as a masterpiece of vernacular (*kana* 仮名) composition. Dōgen interjects interlinear comments into Chinese texts in ingenious ways that give rise to different readings and interpretations. The treatise was still being edited in the last years of Dōgen's life. There are several different versions of the *Shōbogenzō* with varying numbers of fascicles, but the most comprehensive is the 95-fascicle edition that is available in several English translations. However, some scholars prefer dividing the text into several components: a core collection of 75 fascicles that is the main division reflective of Dōgen's philosophy; an additional compilation of 12 fascicles that Dōgen composed late in his career; and another group of 8 miscellaneous fascicles.

The *Eihei Kōroku* primarily consists of formal sermons presented in the Dharma hall, first in Kyoto and then at Eiheiji temple located in the northern mountains, which are entirely written in Sino-Japanese (*kanbun* 漢文) style as an attempt to emulate the teaching of Chinese Zen masters. These sermons usually take up a Zen dialogue or *kōan* and provide a novel commentary. In addition to seven volumes of formal sermons, the ten-volume *Eihei Kōroku* contains one volume of dharma talks, one volume of poetic comments on *kōan* cases, and a final volume of Chinese poems that were composed in China, Kyoto, and Echizen.

Additional prominent Dōgen texts include the *Hōkyōki* (1227) journal and *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* (1230s) sermons, mentioned above, as well as the *Fukanzazengi* (1228, *Universal Recommendation for Zazen Meditation*), an essay of instructions for meditation practice; *Bendōwa* (1231, *Discourse on Attaining the Way*), which answers a series of questions about Dōgen's distinctive approach to Zen training; *Gakudōyōjinshū* (1234, *Essential Principles on Learning the Way*), which ruminates on the philosophy of impermanence; *Mana Shōbōgenō* (1236, *Chinese Version of the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*), a collection of 300 *kōan*s without commentary; *Eihei Shingi* (1240s, *Pure Rules of Eihei Dōgen*), a compilation of manuals for monastic institutional activities; and *Sanshōdōei* (1240s, *Verses from Sanshō Peak*), a collection of 31-syllable Japanese poetry (*waka* 和歌).

DŌGEN'S THOUGHT

The resolution of Dōgen's doubt about original enlightenment was based on his new understanding of the meaning of a fully unified conception of time in relation to spiritual realization. Prior to his breakthrough experience, Dōgen apparently presumed the existence of conventional dichotomies between past, present, and future, now and then, life and death, impermanence and nirvana, time and eternity, and finitude and buddha-nature. He thought that human beings are bound to the realms of death and impermanence and that enlightenment exists somewhere beyond these limits. However, in the act of casting off body-mind, he realized that each and every single moment encompasses the unity of practice and attainment, so that practice is not prior to – nor does it lead up to – enlightenment, and enlightenment is not a teleological goal reached only at the end of practice. Rather, Dōgen writes in the *Bendōwa*:

> Practice and realization are identical. Because one's present practice is practice in realization, one's initial negotiation of the Way in itself is the whole of original realization. … As it is already realization in practice, realization is endless; as it is practice in realization, practice in beginningless.

> (DZZ, vol. 2: 470)

TEMPORAL BASIS OF ZEN THEORY
AND PRACTICE

The identity of time and eternity, and of practice and realization, is also the key to Dōgen's resolution of another dilemma concerning Zen theory. Prior to Dōgen's arrival in China, Zen was divided on the issue of the relation between the quietude of *zazen* meditation and interpreting *kōan*s as philosophical enigmas and literary gems. The Sōtō sect tended to favor a gradualist approach to *zazen* known as "silent illumination," whereas the Rinzai sect favored the sudden path based on "*kōan* investigation." For Rinzai Zen, the quixotic *kōan* riddles or puzzles represent barriers to language and thought that catapult the practitioner into spontaneous awakening to the standpoint of embracing fundamental nonconceptuality and silence.

Although Dōgen emphasized the priority of "zazen-only" or "just sitting" (*shikan taza* 只管打坐), he also stressed the importance of analyzing and interpreting multiple perspectives embedded in paradoxical *kōan*s as an exercise fully identical with sustained *zazen* training. For example, the Rinzai approach to the *kōan*, "Does the dog have Buddha-nature?", which is the first case in the famous *Mumonkan* (1229, *Gateless Gate*) collection, emphasizes that the answer, *Mu* 無 (literally "no," which can imply nonbeing, negation, or nothingness), puts an end on discourse and cognition. Dōgen, however, interprets *Mu* as suggesting many implications, including the ontological significance of emptiness or nothingness in addition to the skeptical epistemology implied by a silent response to all inquiries.

Dōgen's main discussion of the *Mu kōan* case is in the *Shōbōgenzō* "Busshō" ("Buddha-nature") fascicle, where he examines the notion of buddha-nature in relation to negation and nothingness from nearly every imaginable angle. The following table provides a list of the various doctrines Dōgen enumerates, some of which are complementary while others are contradictory, but each tends to play off and reinforce yet at the same time undermine all of the other possibilities, so that they should be considered part of an inseparable hermeneutic process rather than as discrete doctrinal items:

being-buddha-nature	*u-busshō* 有仏性
whole-being buddha-nature	*shitsuu-busshō* 悉有仏性
buddha-nature here-and-now	*busshō-genzen* 仏性現前
impermanence-buddha-nature	*mujō-busshō* 無常仏性
nothingness-buddha-nature	*mu-busshō* 無仏性
emptiness-buddha-nature	*kū-busshō* 空仏性
denial of buddha-nature	*busshō-mu* 仏性無

While emphasizing the parity of affirmation and negation, Dōgen does not overlook the critical and subversive aspect of language whose foundation is the insubstantiality of nothingness-buddha-nature, a notion he prefers to the denial of buddha-nature or the termination of discussion regarding the implications of doctrine. Yet, every time Dōgen speaks of the merits of *Mu*, he quickly reverses himself and relativizes this with an emphasis on the fact that in some versions of the case the answer is "yes" (*u* 有).

In his discussions of the *Mu kōan* and many other cases in his writings, Dōgen's method departs from that of other Zen thinkers, especially in the Rinzai sect, and is quite distinctive in that he consistently challenges and intrudes upon the dialogues he discusses to create inversions and reversals of conventional readings and interpretations, such as by justifying the truth expressed by apparent losers in dialogues or questioning the merit of the apparent

winners. Therefore, his view can be referred to as the "hermeneutics of intrusion" in that, after going through preliminary stages of offering a comprehensive sweep of approaches to the topic of buddha-nature along with an atomized investigation of particular phrasings from the standpoint of multi-perspectivism that fosters the inversion of conventional readings, he takes license to alter the course of the dialogue in the *kōan* record. Dōgen changes the way the exchange transpires and makes suggestions and counter-suggestions in the spirit of the early Chinese Zen masters' irreverent creativity that are aimed at enhancing the contemporaneous significance of the case for disciples in training.

THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL NATURE OF TEMPORALITY

As first and foremost a Zen master, Dōgen was primarily concerned with attaining and expressing enlightenment. His philosophy of time was aimed not at developing a speculative or abstract metaphysical theory but at clarifying and refining his existential experience of the casting off of body-mind. According to Dōgen, the unity of temporality harbors a complex, multidimensional experiential structure. First, Dōgen asserts the absolute identity of being (*u*), or all forms of existence, with time in that whatever exists is a temporal manifestation (*ji*). Nothing – including the ultimate reality of buddha-nature – exists apart from the temporal domain that is actualized by sustained religious practice. According to *Shōbōgenzō* "Busshō," "the buddha-nature is not incorporated prior to attaining buddhahood; it is incorporated upon the attainment of buddhahood. The buddha-nature is always manifested with the attainment of buddhahood" (DZZ, vol. 1: 22).

That is, the buddha-nature is neither an innate potentiality nor an attainable endpoint, but is fully integrated with the continuing dynamism of impermanent reality. But, Dōgen stresses, it is also important to clarify the meaning of the impermanence of being-time encompassing buddha-nature so that it is realized in a way that is free of delusions or misconception. Impermanence for Dōgen should not be conflated with the mere passing away of time in the sense that "time flies like an arrow," which implies that temporal flow is separable from existence as a fleeting yet substantive movement passing from the past through the present and inexorably into the future towards a specific goal. Rather, impermanence is a dynamic, comprehensive nonsubstantive process that is coordinated with the dimension of continuity embracing the identity of all three tenses.

The unity of being-time can be provisionally distinguished in terms of two intertwined levels. The first level of spontaneity, suddenness, or immediacy occurs in each and every holistic moment right here and now, that is, in the eternal now that is beyond relativity in terms of dividing before and after, now and then, or life and death. However, this level of spontaneity should not be understood as mere quickness or rapidity in the conventional sense that time is flying by. Rather, spontaneity is supported by the second level of continuity (*kyōryaku* 經歷), which includes the irreversible sequence of past, present, and future in addition to the reversibility and mutual interrelation of the three tenses. In one of the most paradoxical passages in Buddhist philosophy Dōgen writes in the "Uji" ("Being-time") fascicle, "There is continuity from today to tomorrow, from today to yesterday, from yesterday to today, from today to today, and from tomorrow to tomorrow" (DZZ, vol. 1: 242.). In other words, time is ever moving backwards as well as forwards so that spontaneity is sustained by a multidimensional continuity. The fullness of the moment realized in the casting off of body-mind is not passing away, but instead this expression harbors the unity of the tenses.

Dōgen repeatedly stresses that the oneness of being-time does not function in the human or anthropocentric dimension alone, but it is fully trans-anthropocentric in encompassing all forms of existence, and it is especially evident through a contemplation of the beauty of nature and the cyclicality of seasonal rotation. Like many Zen masters in China and Japan, as well as other East Asian mystical recluses in the Daoist and Shintō traditions, Dōgen seemed most content after he moved from the secular, highly politicized strife in Kyoto to the splendor of the Echizen mountains, where he experienced a constant state of communion with the natural environment. In his writings he frequently equates the buddha-nature with phenomena such as mountains, rivers, and the moon, and he eloquently expresses an aesthetic naturalist rapture in which the rushing stream is experienced as the voice of the living Buddha, while the mountain peak synesthetically becomes Buddha's face.

A central feature of aesthetic realization is Dōgen's use of poetic language, especially elaborate metaphor and philosophical wordplay, to convey a sense of emotional fulfillment that enhances rather than opposes the enlightenment experience of detachment from worldly, materialistic concerns. One of Dōgen's most eloquent poems was written near the end of life as he returned from Echizen to the capital city for medical care. Marking the journey to Kyoto for the first time in ten years, for what would prove to be the last time, Dōgen wrote the following *waka*:

Kusa no ha ni	Like a blade of grass,
Kadodesuru mi no	My frail body
Kinobe yama	Treading the path to Kyoto
Kumo obi oka aru	Seeming to wander
Kokochi koso sure.	Amid cloudy mist on a mountain path.

<div align="right">(DZZ, vol. 7: 172)</div>

Here, the phrase "a blade of grass" expresses a convergence of departure and return, of feeling and detachment, and of the particularity of an individual sense of frailty with the universal insubstantiality and impermanence of phenomena.

DŌGEN'S WRITINGS: RELIGIOUS AESTHETICS OF SELF AND NATURE

Additional examples of Dōgen's Japanese and Chinese poetry as seen in the context of medieval East Asian society from comparative literary and philosophical perspectives further comment on two of his main doctrines. One involves impermanence, as seen in relation to nature, which deals with the realm beyond and encompassing yet not necessarily transcending humanity; the second deals with emotions, which refers to the domain of human interiority or subjectivity; and the third refers to language, which is the vehicle for expression that can be considered in Zen either to distort and disrupt or to convey and enhance the multiple dimensions of truth and reality. The doctrinal poems can be analyzed in terms of the way in which they suggest key aspects of Dōgen's overall philosophy of religion also expressed in the *Shōbōgenzō* and other writings and how they show affinities with the religious-aesthetic tradition of medieval Japan whereby attaining spiritual goals was fused with artistic and literary ideals by leading intellectuals, who straddled the camps of Buddhist spiritual and aesthetic pursuits.

Dōgen's *waka* often make an interesting use of poetic imagery and stylistic conventions but are noteworthy mainly for their didacticism. For example, the following *waka* seems to be an "allusive variation" (*honkadori* 本歌取り, that is, subtle change of an inspiring source version) on a famous love poem attributed to Hitomaro and included in several noted anthologies such as *Hyakunin isshū* by the famous poet Fujiwara Teika (1162–1241), who also integrated contemplation into his theory of composition in the *Kindai Shōka*. The original poem conveys the nightlong torment of unrequited love that leaves one unable to sleep. It uses the pillow-word *ashihiki* to modify *mountain*, in that "pheasant" is literally a "mountain bird" (*yamadori* 山鳥) in the first three lines, which provide the setting for the evocation of loneliness and despair in the last two lines:

Ashihiki no	Long night,
Yamadori no o no	Long as the
Shidario no	Long tail of the pheasant:
Naganagashi yo o	I find myself here
Hitorikamonen.	Resting alone.

Borrowing the opening lines of this poem so that some of the implications of the original are suggested, Dōgen turns the verse into an expression of the doctrine of the identity of "original enlightenment and marvelous sustained practice" (*honshō myōshū* 本証妙修), which represents a middle way-resolution to Dōgen's doubt about enlightenment:

Ashihiki no	Long night,
Yamadori no o no	Long as the
Shidario no	Long tail of the pheasant:
Naganagashi yo mo	The light of dawn
Akete keri kana.	Breaking through

(DZZ, vol. 7: 166)

The image of imminent daybreak is implied in the source poem in the traditional sense of suggesting the sad parting of lovers, or more poignantly here, in a heightened awareness of the partner's absence. In Dōgen's version, however, the dawn explicitly and positively connotes the sudden appearance of self-illumination, an effective metaphor for Zen awakening, evoking the event of Śākyamuni Buddha's enlightenment after his nightly vigils. The new poem conveys the interplay of delusion (night) and realization (dawn), and meditation (the "long" night of practice) and awakening (the disclosure of light), to show the unity underlying the different phases and the gradual unfolding of the enlightenment experience. Yet this *waka* can be criticized from a literary standpoint for using too much of the original verse; the device of variation tends to be more effective if the echoing is somewhat more concealed by the syntax.

SELF-AWARENESS OF THE FRAILTY OF IMPERMANENCE

The background theme for the majority of writings in Dōgen's various collections is the meaning of impermanence, which as we have seen is the fundamental concern in his life and thought. This issue, central to all forms of Buddhist philosophy, also marks the basic

point of convergence between Dōgen and the East Asian literary tradition. According to biographical sources, Dōgen's understanding of impermanence was based on a childhood feeling of anguish and abandonment because of the untimely death of his parents as symbolized by the smoke drifting from the incense at his mother's funeral. Although the traditional account may be exaggerated, it is clear that the deep sense of sorrow Dōgen experienced lies at the root of his philosophy of the unity of practice and realization. Inspired by his grief, Dōgen stresses the need for continuous meditation renewed each and every moment right here and now.

In *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki,* Dōgen repeatedly argues that "the first and foremost thing to be concerned with is detachment from the ego through the contemplation of impermanence" (DZZ, vol. 7: 72). The notion that coming to terms with impermanence is crucial to the abandonment of egocentrism is also stressed in the following passage in *Gakudōyōjinshū*, which Kyoto School philosopher and intellectual historian Karaki Junzō 唐木順三 (1904–80) cites as exemplifying Japanese lyrical eloquence about transiency. Here Dōgen emphasizes that the aspiration to attain enlightenment and the transformation of the self occur only when impermanence is authentically understood:

> When you contemplate impermanence genuinely, the ordinary selfish mind does not arise, and you do not seek fame or fortune because you realize that nothing prevents the swift flow of time. You must practice the Way as though you were trying to keep your head from being consumed by fire. … If you hear the flattering call of the god Kimnara or the kalavinka bird, regard them as merely the breeze blowing in your ears. Even though you see the beautiful face of Maoqing or Xishi, consider that they are the morning dew obstructing your vision.
>
> (DZZ, vol. 5: 41)

Dōgen distinguishes between two perspectives: the inauthentic or selfish view, which negates or overlooks impermanence and presumes the stability of worldly concerns; and the enlightened standpoint of non-ego, in which a person's awareness of the fleeting quality of time transmutes into a resolve for perpetual training. An authentic view of impermanence, according to Dōgen, leads one to identify practice and realization with the holistic moment that encompasses self and other, as well as the three tenses of time. Transiency is seen not as a barrier or obstacle to attainment but as the vehicle by which enlightenment is realized and renewed.

In *Bendōwa* he maintains, "Even if practiced by only a single person at one time, *zazen* imperceptibly reverberates throughout every dharma at all times. Therefore, it ceaselessly transmits the Buddha's teaching in the past, present and future of the entire unlimited universe" (DZZ, vol. 2: 464.). Impermanence as the very structure of reality must not be resisted but embraced through a sustained awareness of the formlessness of all forms. The theme of time and impermanence has long been dominant in Japanese literature. Poems from the era of the *Manyōshū* collection in the Nara period (710–794), including Hitomaro's long verse (*chōka* 長歌, in contrast to *waka* or *tanka* 短歌 (lit. "short poem")) on the discovery of a body washed up on shore and Okura's long verse, "On the Instability of Human Life," explore the issues of grief and sadness about the transiency of life and the inevitability of death in a way that probably reflects a Buddhist sensibility. Okura's poem concludes by contrasting the apparent stability of nature (which is "immovable as a rock") with the unstoppability of the passing of time in the world of human concerns.

The following Chinese verse, which accompanies one of two famous portraits of Dōgen, uses an intricate wordplay involving the word "real" to make a statement about the inseparability of truth and illusion:

> If you take this portrait of me to be real,
> Then what am I, really?
> But why hang it there,
> If not to anticipate people getting to know me?
> Looking at this portrait,
> Can you say that what is hanging there
> Is really me?
> In that case your mind will never be
> Fully united with the wall
> (as in Bodhidharma's wall-gazing meditation cave).

(DZZ, vol. 4: 250)

The last line alludes to the legend of Bodhidarma's (the first Zen patriarch) practice of meditation rigorously pursued while gazing at the wall of a cave for nine years. There is a delightful, self-deprecatory irony in this verse given the important ritual role portraits play in Zen monastic life as objects of veneration, substituting for a deceased master on ceremonial occasions, a convention Dōgen obviously questions but does not necessarily reject.

REALIZATION THROUGH NATURALISM AND EMOTIONS

Dōgen stresses in *Bendōwa* that the instantaneous practice of *zazen* at once spreads to and is illuminated by the "Buddha activity in which earth, grass, trees, walls, tiles, and pebbles are all involved" (DZZ, vol. 2: 464.). Thus *zazen* engages and completes the realization of each and every phenomenon. The mind, therefore, must heed and identify with the mountains and rivers that embody and reveal the buddha-nature. This results in the authentication of the mind, or the realization of the universal mind, which experiences the synesthesia of "mountains flowing" or the phantasm of "mountains walking in the sky or on water"; the paradox of the "flowing and non-flowing of the water"; the irony of asking "not whether the observer is enlightened by the mountain but whether the mountain is enlightened by the observer"; and the holistic vision of seeing "a single plum blossom initiating the arrival of spring" (the image of blossoms is particularly emphasized in quite a few Chinese verses). Yet Dōgen does not highlight the attainment of an altered state of consciousness or extraordinary perception; he points to awareness of nature as it is in its basic or unadorned form.

In his creative rewriting of the traditional saying that the originally empty Buddha takes on form "thus or like [*nyo*] the moon is reflected in water," Dōgen maintains in Shōbōgenzō "Tsuki" ("The Image of the Moon"), "'Thus' is [nothing other than] the 'moon in water.' It is water-thus, moon-thus, thus-thus, in-thus. 'Thus' is not 'like' [in the sense of similarity, resemblance, or analogy]. 'Thus' is 'as it is' (*ze*) [or 'nothing other than']." He stresses that beyond the question of whether water does or does not flow is the realization that "water is only thus-itself-the-true-form [*nyoze-jissō*] of water" (DZZ, vol. 1: 262).

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In the following Chinese poem, Dōgen evokes the directness and immediacy of primordial nature through a deceptively simple description. Any reference to individual response has been eliminated, and the poem expresses a full, unimpeded subjective realization by means of harmony with nature:

> Every morning, the sun rises in the east;
> Every night, the moon sets in the west;
> Clouds gathering over the foggy peaks;
> Rain passes through the surrounding hills and plains.

(DZZ, vol. 3: 34)

This Chinese verse has an affinity with Japanese poetry, in which nature is generally seen as either a mirror or a model for people. In the first sense, nature reflects human experience and attitudes. Since the law of incessant change binds humans and nature alike, nature becomes the perfect symbol to represent the way that a human's state of mind is affected by time. For example, the sorrow of lost or unrequited love is seen as resembling fading blossoms, or loneliness is felt like a chilling autumn wind. Yet nature is also depicted as a mystery of transcendental oneness that encompasses and reconciles the transiency that humanity invariably experiences.

The quest for Dōgen as a Zen poet was to express the depths of interiority while using the fewest words so as not to obfuscate the true vision. The expression must be a direct manifestation of the mind's profundity, bypassing false objectification, which reflects an inauthentic personal response to nature. It thereby creates a linguistic field of associations and multiple nuances that manifests the contemplative field of authentic subjectivity. The optimal means of conveying this contemplative stance is a pure description of "water-thusness," "the sun rising in the east," "the autumn dusk descending," or "rice in the bowl, water in the bucket." These are deceptively simple linguistic devices for spontaneously disclosing the ultimate realization.

Emotion, or subjectivity, is a key to interpreting the main similarities and differences between Dōgen the religious seeker and medieval Japanese literature based on pursuing the ideal of creating *yūgen* 幽玄 ("profound mystery") attained by realizing the shadowy, ephemeral nature of reality. According to Kyoto School philosopher Karaki Junzo's insightful analysis, the high point in the development of the view of impermanence in Japanese intellectual history is the overcoming of any trace of emotionalism in Dōgen's religious thought. Dōgen casts off inauthentic deceptions and fixations through a complete acceptance of impermanence in its fundamental state. He asserts, for example, that the identity of "birth-death, and arising-desistance, is itself [nothing other than] *nirvana*." In contrast, Japanese poetry, as Robert Brower and Earl Miner suggest, considers that "the great enemy of nature and human affairs is time … [for time] is a force over which man has no control at all" (cited in Brower and Miner 1961: 310, 375). Yet, to dispute Karaki's conclusion, at least in part, Dōgen's poetry does resemble literary expressions in that it shows a remarkable range of emotions, from the celebration of moments of ephemeral beauty to the expression of loneliness, longing, and regret. At the same time, in contrast to Brower and Miner *yūgen* poetry expressing *sabi* 寂 ("loneliness") completes the emotional cycle in emphasizing melancholic resignation or desolation.

Transiency for Dōgen and the Japanese religious-aesthetic tradition can be interpreted either "negatively" as a source of suffering, grief, despair, and desolation, or "positively,"

as a source of celebration of the promise of renewal and as a symbol of awakening. Although transiency ultimately discloses nonsubstantiality, the subjective attitudes it evokes serve as a kind of necessary deception or an illusion surpassing illusion in the quest for a transcendental standpoint. The "negative" view of impermanence includes Dōgen's personal lament for the loss of his parents as well as the poignant sorrow at the passing of things represented by the fading spring light and the cicada's melancholy call. The latter poem evokes the literary tradition with its use of the pivot-word *higurashi*, meaning "cicada," but also suggesting the setting sun (*higure*), the message the insect's sound conveys:

Yama fukami	Rising, as the mountain
Mine ni mo tani ni mo	Peaks and valleys deepen –
Koe tatete	The twilight sound of the cicada
Kyō mo kurenu	Singing of a day
Higurashi zo naku.	Already gone by.

(DZZ, vol. 7: 164)

Yet a deeper "negative" aspect is the sense of ontological anguish at the universality and inevitability of loss, symbolized by the evaporating dew and the withering of plants and trees in other *waka*. At once opposing and extending this dimension, the "positive" interpretation of transiency is based on the possibilities for renewal and continuity associated with the spring blossoms as well as the moral imperative for sustained practice at every moment. Several poems go beyond the relativity of celebration and desolation to suggest the non-substantive moment of transition without substratum or duration as the metaphysical ground of interpenetrating or overlapping seasonal manifestations. These poems express the primordial time in a way that resembles celebration but reveals a more fundamental affirmation of impermanence "as it is" (*arinomama*).

The aim of religious experience is to purify and liberate the individual mind to reach an attunement with the holistic, formless truth of concrete reality. Therefore, the perspective of impermanence is determined by the condition of the mind, or the level of authentic subjectivity attained through a realization of the universal mind through observing transiency. The observer must cast off his or her status as spectator and become fully immersed in the unfolding of impermanence. Since the incessancy of change is inalterable, it is incumbent on the mind of the beholder to transform the negative impression on the individual mind into, first, a positive outlook, and, ultimately, a transcendental awareness so that the limited, negative view is converted into a lyrical, holistic standpoint.

In his interpretation of such doctrines as *sangai-yuishin* 三界唯心 ("triple world is mind only"), *sokushin-zebutsu* 即心是佛 ("this very mind is itself the Buddha"), and *shinjingakudō* 身心學道 ("learning the Way through the mind"), Dōgen argues that the universal mind as the ground of phenomenal reality is neither an independent possession nor an entity that views the world as a spectator from a distance. Rather, it is indistinguishable from "walls, fences, tiles, and stones," "mountains, rivers, and earth," or "sun, moon, and sky."

The complex and potentially productive role emotions play in the process of awakening the authentic mind is revealed in a poem that highlights the underlying connection between a personal attraction to form and color and the development of a spiritual realization of formlessness by focusing on the word *medekeri* (lit. "love" or "attraction") in the final line, *iro ni medekeri* (lit. "attracted to form"). This phrase reinforces Dōgen's emphasis on the

role of an emotional attunement to natural beauty. The word *medekeri* (also pronounced *ai*), which also appears in the final sentence of the first paragraph of the *Shōbōgenzō* "Genjōkōan" ("Spontaneous Realization of Zen Enlightenment") fascicle as part of the compound word *aijaku* (sadness), suggests either desirous or compassionate love, depending on the context; both meanings seem implicit here:

Ōzora ni	Contemplating a clear moon
Kokoro no tsuki o	Reflecting a mind as empty as the open sky –
Nagamuru mo	Drawn by its beauty,
Yami ni mayoite	I lose myself
Iro ni medekeri.	In the shadows it casts.

(DZZ, vol. 7: 168)

This *waka* plays off the image of the full moon, a symbol in the Buddhist tradition for the universality of buddha-nature, and in Court poetry a symbol for longing and consolation. It contains other terms highly suggestive from a Buddhist standpoint: *iro* (form, the first of the five aggregates that constitute human existence, and the objects of desire); *ōzora* (the "open sky," symbolizing emptiness or nonsubstantiality); and *mayou* (to "lose myself" in the ensnarement of self-imposed ignorance, a concept that is paradoxically identified with enlightenment in Mahāyāna thought). Through this imagery, the verse asserts the productive interplay between moon and mind, light and dark, and delusion and awakening. To be drawn to the moon for the beauty of its form and color (*iro*) is a self-surpassing experience because it eventually leads to an understanding that the moonlight as the source of illumination mirrors the enlightened mind free of distractions.

In responding to the light, however, even a mind originally or potentially clear (*ōzora*) invariably becomes lost (*mayou*) in the shadows. Yet just as the shadow is a reflection of the true source, interaction with concealed brightness is also edifying. Thus emotions represent both turmoil and the inspiration to awaken from the bondage they cause. The self must continually lose itself in the shadowy world of impermanence to ultimately realize itself liberated from, yet involved in, the unceasing process of continual change. This recalls the doctrine of *ippō-gūjin* (total exertion of a single dharma) expressed in "Genjōkōan," which also uses the moon as a metaphor to disclose the interplay of delusion and enlightenment: "Through the unity of body-mind, forms are seen and voices are heard. Although they are realized intimately, it is not like shadows reflected in a mirror, or the moon in water. When one side is illuminated, the other side is concealed" (DZZ, vol. 1: 3).

DŌGEN'S CONTRIBUTIONS

The impact of Dōgen's philosophical and poetic works remains strong for several reasons. As the founder and author of the main text of the Sōtō sect, his writings are continually studied and interpreted by Buddhist practitioners and scholars. As an expression of a view of impermanence that seems to capture the essence of Buddhist teaching in the context of the medieval Japanese religious-aesthetic tradition and also anticipates the emphasis on temporality, death, and finitude in modern Western philosophy, the *Shōbōgenzō* stands at the forefront of international comparative philosophy. While there has been much debate about whether Dōgen's philosophy may have moved in a new direction in the later period by stressing a more straightforward view of karmic retribution while also embracing

supernaturalism, there seems to be no question that he remains consistent throughout his career in emphasizing the priority of *zazen* meditative practice as a means of recognizing and reconciling oneself with the fundamental flow of time characterized by the incessant ephemerality of all aspects of human and natural existence.

ABBREVIATIONS

DZZ = *Dōgen Zenji Zenshū* 道元禪師全集, 7 volumes [*Collected Works of Zen Priest Dōgen*] (1988–93). Edited Kawamura Kōdō, et. al. Tokyo: Shunjūsha.

NOTE

1   Note that in this chapter the terms "enlightenment" and "awakening" are used somewhat interchangeably but with slightly different nuances to refer to the soteriological goal of Zen practice: the former term indicates the steady state of realization that is a potential for attainment commonly held by all beings, especially as suggested by the East Asian Buddhist doctrine of "original enlightenment," whereas the latter term signifies the momentary flash of insight an individual experiences as a spiritual breakthrough.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

MILAREPA

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Ruth Gamble

INTRODUCTION

Milarepa (Mi la ras pa) was born in the high Himalaya of Tibet, in the small village of Kyangngatsa (Skyang rnga rtsa) near the present-day border with Nepal, probably in 1040 CE, and died a good eighty-three years later, probably in 1123 CE. As he eschewed political and administrative circles, there is little or no synchronic evidence of his life, and therefore, while most scholars accept that he existed, doubts remain about even his most basic details, including his dates. What has been preserved in abundance, by contrast, are stories about him and songs attributed to him. Some of these are obviously apocryphal and reflect the layers of biographical, lyrical, and cultic traditions that developed after his life. But some can be dated to his lifetime, or very soon after, and therefore provide ample evidence at least for his existence, if not for some of the particulars of his activities.

THE MAN AND THE MYTHS

This mere fact of existence is neither the most interesting nor the most important thing about Milarepa, however. The very layers that a search for his skeletal, historical facts would discard are much more significant than the historical data they obscure. This is because, either shortly after his death or at some point during his lifetime, Milarepa ceased to be merely a man and became a myth, and this myth has inspired a veritable Milarepa industry. In the millennium since he died, his story has been sustained first by wandering bards, then later by great literary and publishing efforts in both Tibetan and European languages, and most recently in academic studies, theater, film, and even on Facebook.

For a general audience, his name evokes an easily recognizable story of redemption. Yet Milarepa is also a quintessentially Buddhist yogi. Like many other revered Buddhist masters, he is invoked by those who see him as a transcended being and transcendent paradigm they wish to reproduce, whether they are practicing in Tibetan caves or Buddhist meditation centres in Hong Kong or New York. This is particularly true of those following the Kagyü (Bka' brgyud) lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, of which he is deemed a founder, but also amongst the practitioners of other Tibetan Buddhist lineages and even many non-Tibetan Mahāyāna traditions.

Despite this wide cultural and geographic appeal, all those approaching his songs and story are made particularly aware of their sense of place. Although they evoke common Buddhist themes that have inspired an international conglomeration of spiritual seekers, they are quintessentially Tibetan. Their geographic specificity is reflected both through their symbiotic relationship with the landscape of Southern Tibet and in their promotion as an apogee of the Tibetan literary tradition. Indeed, for many exiled Tibetans and those living under Chinese rule in the People's Republic of China, this combination of location and the Milarepa tradition's literary achievements has made his name a symbol of their culture.

Given all these stories, all these songs, all this myth, and all this meaning, it would be a thankless and ill-conceived task to go digging for an "original" or "historical" Milarepa. Besides, even if it were possible to weed out the myths and establish the verifiable facts about him, the resulting "person" would not be the Milarepa with whom millions have developed a relationship. For them, Milarepa is the stuff of his myth, of his stories and songs, of the paradigm of Tantric Buddhist practice that he represents. To explain Milarepa, therefore, it seems necessary to do two things: first, to tell an abbreviated version of his tale in its historic, literary, and religious context; and second, to tell the tale of the tale by providing some highlights from the nine hundred years of storytelling and song singing that his memory has inspired.

In many ways, this is a false segregation because these two elements are necessarily intertwined. The story of Milarepa retold here, for example, is based on the influential fifteenth-century version of events by the raconteur Tsangnyön Heruka (Gtsang smyon he ru ka, 1452–1507), "the Madman from Tsang." He wrote two well-known texts on Milarepa, *The Life of Milarepa* (*Rje btsun mi la'i rnam thar*) and *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* (*Rje btsun mi la ras pa'i mgur 'bum*). In these works, Tsangnyön presents the story as if it is Milarepa's autobiography. In *The Life*, "Milarepa" tells the tale of his early life to his students, before a coda describes the events surrounding his death. *The Hundred Thousand Songs* fills in the lacuna between these two periods through a series of vignettes relating poetic encounters between the master and either his students, other yogis or his adversaries.

I chose to present an overview of this version of his tale here because, although earlier accounts of the story are less elaborate and closer in time (and perhaps fact) to the historical Milarepa's life and songs, it is Tsangnyön's retelling that has served as the basis for most people's experience of Milarepa. Motivated by a desire to promote the "whispered lineage" (*rnyan rgyud*) of teachings that had descended to Tsangnyön himself from Milarepa through his student Rechungpa (Ras byung pa, 1083/4–1161) and later lineage holders, Tsangnyön was not only committed to the literary presentation of this narrative but also its publication and promotion, for which he sought help from a variety of local worthies. The success of his multi-faceted endeavor meant that his works became the key moment in the tale's tale; all events that came before are generally construed as their precedents and those that come after as their consequence.

THE STORY

The beginning of this combined tale sets a scene that provides Tsangnyön with the perfect platform to promote his lineage and evoke the intimacy that has so endeared this story to its readers. In this scene, an elderly Milarepa, surrounded by his closest students, is asked by Tsangnyön's lineal predecessor Rechungpa to "tell your story at length."[1] But in a reflection of Tibetan cultural norms, Tsangnyön's Milarepa does not begin his tale with his own birth

or his previous lifetimes, but instead with a brief history of his clan. He descends, he explains, from a "great band of nomads in the northern region of Üru," which is to say the plains of Northern Tibet. His family line, he continues, began with a tantric practitioner of the old, or Nyingma (Rnying ma), tradition, who was called José (Jo sras) or "noble's son" and acquired the name Mila (Mi la) after a fight with a demon. The demon was so impressed with his power that he cried out "Mila, Mila (What a man! What a man!)." It was José, Milarepa explains, who moved from central Tibet to the borderlands. And it was after his death that the family fell on hard times and was forced even further into the perimeter, finding itself in the Kyangngatsa region. In this area, the Mila family experienced ups and downs across the generations, but before his marriage, Milarepa's father, Mila Sherab Gyaltsen (Mi la shes rab rgyal mtshan), had managed to restore the family fortunes. He had even built a new, large house that was so impressive it was named for its size: Kazhi Dunggye (Ka bzhi gdung brgyad), "four columns, eight beams." And it was into this house that he brought his new wife, Nyangtsa Kargyen (Myang rtsa dkar rgyan).

All this family history happened between the end of the Tibetan Empire (618–842) and the rise of the Sakya clan (1264–1365 CE) when local chieftains ruled Tibet and security was determined through familial networks like those just outlined. This was also the time when tantric lineages like Milarepa's, the Kagyü, and the rival lineages of the Sakya (Sa skya), and Kadam (Bka' gdams), were all in the process of formation through a renewed enthusiasm for the importation and promotion of Indian Buddhist practices and texts. It was against this background of internecine fighting among local rulers and a renaissance of tantric Buddhism and its related arts – including poetry and song – that the young boy who was to become Milarepa was born. The first personal name his father gave him reflected this milieu. As Tsangnyön explained, Mila Sherab Gyaltsen called his newborn son Töpaga (Thos pa dga'), or "happy to hear," because he was happy to hear that he had a son to carry on the family name and offer protection to the household. (Later, when people heard him singing, they reflected that because they were "happy to hear" him sing his father had named him well.)

The family was completed when four years later Nyangtsa Kargyen gave birth to a girl, who was known as Peta Gönkyi (Pe ta mgon skyid). As the family flourished, however, their neighbours, who viewed them as "foreigners" because they had only lived in the area for several generations, resented their success and waited for some misfortune to befall them. Misfortune came to them several years after Peta's birth when Mila Sherab Gyaltsen passed away. Before he died, he placed his family and wealth in the hands of his brother and his brother's wife, Töpaga's paternal uncle and aunt. They were given the express instruction that Töpaga was to be returned this wealth and responsibility when he reached maturity and that the uncle should care for Töpaga, his sister, and mother in the meantime. But his uncle and aunt were not good people, and after they moved into Kazhi Dunggye, Töpaga, Peta, and their mother found themselves living as servants in their own home. The situation came to a crisis when Töpaga reached maturity and they refused to return his father's belongings to him, insisting instead that Mila Sherab Gyaltsen had borrowed everything he owned from them, and they were only taking back that which they owned.

After this mistreatment, Nyangtsa Kargyen was furious and determined that neither she nor her children would stay at Kazhi Dunggye. Instead, she and her daughter began to work the fields and, with help from relatives, she sent Töpaga to study writing and rituals with a nearby tantrika. One evening, while he attended a ceremony, Töpaga got drunk and on his walk home started to sing. By coincidence, his mother was working in a nearby field. When she heard him, rather than being "joyful," she was horrified. "Nowhere on earth is there anyone more miserable

than me and my children," she said, "so how could my son be singing?" Töpaga was so moved by the effect his singing had on his mother that he asked her what she wanted him to do.

> I would like to see you draped in a fine cloak and mounted upon a horse with your stirrups slashing the throats of our hated enemies, [she said]. Such will not come to pass, yet success is still possible by means of treachery. So I would like you to train to become an expert in black magic, curses, and casting hail.
>
> <div align="right">(Tsangnyön Heruka 2010: 28)</div>

With this direction from his mother, Töpaga set off from his village to learn black magic. From his first teacher he acquired enough magical lore to cause his uncle and aunt's home to collapse during a wedding feast, killing thirty-five people, but leaving them alive with their grief. When this act still did not satiate his mother's need for revenge, he studied hail-making with another teacher and wreaked havoc on the whole village's crops. After hearing news of the devastation his actions had brought, he was racked by guilt and, determined to atone for his evil deeds, he went looking for someone to teach him Buddhist practices.

The first teacher he met was Nyangtö Rinang (Myang stod ri nang), a master of the Great Perfection (or Rdzogs chen) school. Nyangtö assured him that the Dharma he preached was so powerful that he could "meditate by day and become a buddha that day, or meditate by night and become a buddha that night." But in Töpaga's case this was not to be. After training for several days, he was no more awakened. Confused by his teaching's inadequacy, Nyangtö Rinang told Töpaga that someone so encumbered with negative karma as he might need the Dharma that Marpa the translator had brought back from India.

Along with Milarepa, Marpa (Mar pa; 1012–97) was the other major figure in the establishment of the Kagyü lineage in Tibet. The creation and promotion of his biography was therefore also a major part of Tsangnyön's literary and publication project. In Tsangnyön's version of his life story, he presents Marpa as the epitome of the awakened tantric householder, someone who maintains the pretence of worldly interest while secretly viewing the world with enlightened eyes.

Marpa's reputation had been made by his journeys to India, during which he received instruction from the *siddha*s, or "realized ones." His practices and his lineage of followers therefore came to be associated with the "later transmission" (*phyi dar*) of "new tantras" (*sngags gsar ma*) in Tibetan Buddhism. In Tsangnyön's telling of both Marpa and Milarepa's life stories, these new practices and lineages are positively compared with the practices of the "old ones," the Nyingma, which are described as either lowly, black magic, or ineffective forms of Buddhism. In this section of the story, Tsangnyön's view of the Nyingma is very evident. He insists first that the Great Perfection practices did not work for Milarepa. And, furthermore, that Marpa was so powerful that when Milarepa heard his name, he reacted instantly; the hairs on his body stood and he began to cry. After this reaction, the story continues, Milarepa knew that he must set out to find Marpa, so he thanked Nyantö Rinang, and set off.

Unlike Töpaga's earlier teachers, however, Marpa seemed reluctant to teach him. Instead of proffering his Dharma easily, Marpa demanded that Töpaga first complete what were to become his famous austerities. Marpa began by asking Töpaga to direct a hailstorm against his enemies. Töpaga did as he was asked, but the teachings were not forthcoming. Then Marpa asked Töpaga to build a round tower on the eastern spur of a mountain. But when it was half-finished, Marpa told him to tear it down and put all the dirt back where he had found it. After Töpaga had undone all his work, Marpa apologized and explained he had

been drunk when he asked him to dismantle the tower. But he repeated this trick twice more, and by this stage Töpaga had developed a sore on his back that made it difficult for him to continue. Frustrated, he asked Marpa's wife, Dakmema (Bdag med ma), to help him, but then Marpa accused him of cheating.

As he began work on a fourth tower and a covered walkway, several of Marpa's other students came and asked their teacher for tantric empowerments, which Marpa granted to all in his household – except Töpaga. After this rejection, the young man left Marpa's home briefly, without Marpa's permission, and went to study with one of his teacher's senior students, Lama Ngogpa (Bla ma rngog pa). But when Lama Ngogpa discovered that Marpa had not granted permission for Töpaga to study with him, he sent him back. After Marpa had chastised him again for this deception, Töpaga was close to committing suicide, and it was only then that Marpa deigned to teach him his Dharma, explaining that all the torment had purified his past deeds and made him a suitable person to practice the most profound yogas.

The series of yogas that Marpa taught Milarepa are called the *Six Dharmas of Nāropa* (*Na ro'i chos drug*). According to tradition, Nāropa was Marpa's Indian siddha teacher, and the six yogas that he taught were: (1) inner heat (Tib. *gtum mo*; Skt. *caṇḍālī*); (2) illusory body (Tib. *sgyu lus*; Skt. *māyādeha*); (3) clear light (Tib. *'od gsal*; Skt. *prabhāsvara*); (4) dreams (Tib. *rmi lam*; Skt. *svapnadarśana*); (5) the intermediate state (Tib. *bar do*; Skt. *antarābhava*); and (6) transference of consciousness (Tib. *'pho ba*; Skt. *saṃkrānti*). These yogas were practiced alongside the development of a perspective on reality that was called *Mahāmudrā* (Tib. *phyag rgya chen po*), or "The Great Seal." According to this viewpoint, perceived reality is an illusion, and all phenomena are the mind's display, yet this mind does not exist as a final reality either: it is also a phenomenal illusion.

Although this view has been classified as part of the Madhyamaka (or sometimes Yogācāra) Buddhist philosophical system, it is noticeably different in its emphasis on the metaphoric nature of illusory phenomena. This notion of perception as metaphor and the consequent manipulation of its symbols in the practice of the *Six Yogas* also links these practices closely with the poetic imagery through which they are usually explained. Thus, it was through songs sung by both Indian and Tibetan yogis, including those attributed to Milarepa, that Mahāmudrā has been most often taught, and in these songs there are frequent allusions made to illusory images, like reflections and magic tricks.

These techniques and this view were Marpa's key import from India, and in passing them on to Töpaga and his other students he was establishing the tradition of their practice in Tibet. Töpaga was to become by far their most famous advocate and paradigmatic practitioner. Initially, he meditated in retreat near Marpa's house, but later asked for permission from Marpa to return to his homeland.

By the time he reached home, his mother had died, and instead of a joyful reunion, the yogi's encounter with her decomposing bones became the catalyst for one of his most famous songs. According to Andrew Quintman's translation of Tsangnyön's retelling of this encounter, Töpaga said in part:

> In general, all things that exist or appear
> Are impermanent, unstable, they change and they move.
> In particular, the things of life's round have no essence.
> Rather than do things that lack any essence,
> I go to do dharma divine, that's essential.
> (Tsangnyön Heruka 2010: 119)

After performing the funeral rites for his mother, and unable to find his sister who had become a wandering beggar, he left again for the mountains, which were to be his home for the rest of his life. In this isolation, he continued his meditation, surprising local villagers by surviving a winter trapped by snow, and occasionally encountering other fringe dwellers, like hunters and thieves.

It was in the mountains he learned to control his body's subtle winds (Tib. *rlung*; Skt. *prāṇa*) through the practice of inner heat yoga so that he could regulate his body temperature and become a *repa* (*ras pa*), or "cotton [clad] one" despite the cold Tibetan climate. From then on he was known as "the repa of the Mila (family)" or Milarepa. Following this breakthrough, he used other yogas to develop the Mahāmudrā view and attain the final awakening. This feat, this transformation from a mass-murderer to a buddha, marked him as a tantric adept of the highest order; one who had attained awakening in the shortest possible time in the most restrictive of circumstances, in one lifetime in one body.

This was not the end of his life, but it is the end of *The Life's* autobiographical narrative. To continue with Milarepa's tale, we must shift to *The Hundred Thousand Songs*. As I mentioned earlier, this book does not follow the same straightforward narrative as *The Life* and instead presents poems framed by narrative vignettes. Many of these describe his encounters with and instructions to his students. As the tradition has it, Milarepa had two main students: Rechungpa and the monk Gampopa Sonam Rinchen (Sgam po pa bsod nams rin chen, 1079–1153). Gampopa combined Milarepa's teachings with monasticism, and it was primarily his students who went on to establish the various Kagyü monasteries that preserved Milarepa's teachings. But as Tsangnyön held the alternate "whispered lineage" that was descended from Rechungpa, it is Rechungpa whom he gives the starring role in this section of the narrative. Tsangnyön describes a decades-long relationship between Rechungpa and his teacher that is both intimate and jesting. At one point, for example, Milarepa teases his young companion with the following song.

> You managed to give up your jewels and beautiful girlfriends,
> Even though it depressed you a little,
> But you are never going to give up your soft, comfortable, warm bed, are you?
> Give up corpse-like sleep too Rechungpa!
> <div align="right">(Gtsang smyon he ru ka 1999: 450)</div>

Another interesting element of these vignettes is that some are devoted to Milarepa's female disciples, including some that relay the liberation stories of three of his female students, Rechungma (Ras byung ma), Peldarbum (dPal dar 'bum), and Sahle Ö (Sa le 'od), who all attained awakening after studying with Milarepa. Yet other vignettes reflect his disdain for the ordinary life he left behind in the village. On a visit to the village of Ragma, for example, he rejects the villagers' offer to set him up as a householder through a song that contains the following verse.

> Wealth, at first, makes you happy and admired,
> But however much you have, you're never satisfied.
> Soon the demon of stinginess gets you in his vice,
> And you cannot bear to do anything nice.
> Wealth is a beacon for enemies and ghosts,
> You collect it and it's spent by everyone else,

And in the end – you die.
Minding enemies' money pains my mind.
I've given up the fools' gold of *saṃsāra*.
I don't want to be swindled by Māra.
        (Gtsang snyon he ru ka 1999: 289)

The Hundred Thousand Songs also includes stories of his victorious encounters with the practitioners of various other forms of Buddhism, and like the partisan that he was, Tsangnyön approached these tales with particular relish. Like Milarepa's friendly interactions with Rechungpa, Tsangnyön infuses these meetings with Milarepa's humour, but the comments directed toward the famous yogi's antagonists mock more than they tease. The villain of the latter part of the story is one Geshe Takpuwa (Dge shes rtag phu ba), a learned scholar whose education, Tsangnyön suggests, has gotten in the way of his natural insight. At one point, he challenges Milarepa to a debate. Milarepa plays the holy fool in response to this and replies:

I studied, but I didn't learn.
I knew, but I don't understand.
If I did know, I have forgotten,
So listen to this song.
        (Gtsang snyon he ru ka 1999: 814)[2]

Milarepa then goes on to sing a song of his realization of emptiness that answers Geshe Tsakpuwa's questions directly and experientially, without relying on logic or ontological analysis. The learned monk is so incensed by this humiliation that he hatches a plot to kill Milarepa by serving him poison curd. This homicide, as Tsangnyön explains, is impossible because Milarepa's realizations are so advanced that he cannot be killed. Milarepa is completely aware of Tsakpuwa's plans, but he takes the curd nonetheless because he does not want anyone else to eat it. Tsakpuwa's plan does not kill him, but it does provide a catalyst for his decision to abandon his old body.

    For the most detailed description of his death, we must leave *The Hundred Thousand Songs* and return to *The Life*, whose Coda relays this event. It reads like the script of a Powell and Pressburger film; it has a cast of hundreds, including a chorus of gods and goddesses, songs and dancers, along with a thorough exploration of life's meaning. It even ends with a joke. Milarepa, so the story goes, tricked his students into digging up the hearth in his residence by suggesting in his last testament that they would find his hidden stash of gold there. But when they dug it up, instead of gold, they found a knife, some sugar and a letter, that concluded, "Whoever says that Milarepa possessed gold, stuff his mouth with shit!" (Gtsang snyon he ru ka 1999: 866).

THE STORY OF THE STORY

That is Milarepa's story and some examples of the songs through which most people have and will meet him. Indeed, Tsangnyön's *The Life* and *The Hundred Thousand Songs* have proved so influential that many of those who have engaged with the Milarepa story since their publication have explicitly or implicitly accepted these two works as presenting *the* Milarepa story. Any awareness most writers may have had of the historical developments that preceded and succeeded Tsangnyön's retelling of the tale are not usually acknowledged.

This assertion is particularly true of traditional Tibetan commentators, but it is also true of most works on Milarepa in European languages, both academic and popular. Some early Western studies even attributed Tsangnyön's two works to Milarepa, accepting Tsangnyön's autobiographic literary construction as a historical truth. By contrast, only a handful of works have discussed the historic development of the life's story, and there has been no major analysis of developments in its accompanying poetic tradition.

The pre-Tsangnyön story of the story and its songs is, however, quite compelling in its own right. The biography begins with sketches of his life made by his students, develops into a fully-formed biographical and poetic tradition as Milarepa's religious eminence increases, and it is then reformulated as a marker of the troubled Tibetan national identity. The story also travels well, finding its way into the discourses of variant cultures and mediums: including plays, films, social media pages, and even snowboard art.

TRACING LINEAGES

The act of preserving Milarepa's story and songs began either during his lifetime or shortly after his death. The oldest extant literary versions were purportedly composed by two of his close disciples, Ngendzong Repa (Ngan rdzong ras pa, eleventh century) and Gampopa.

The work attributed to Gampopa in particular has had a direct influence on many later redactions. Gampopa is remembered as one of Milarepa's two main spiritual heirs, along with Rechungpa. Given that Gampopa's authority depended primarily on his relationship with Milarepa, it was in his interest to retell his teacher's story. But this retelling entailed some complicated decisions. Milarepa's life had created a new paradigm for Tibetan yogis. And it was the example of his life, rather than any doctrinal developments or philosophical arguments that had been, and has been, his lasting legacy to Tibetan Buddhism. For Gampopa and other students, this abundance of example and lack of fixed doctrine meant they needed to develop new strategies for codifying and maintaining their teacher's instructions and practices.

In order to do this, Gampopa altered the paradigm that Milarepa had established in two major ways. First, unlike Milarepa, who was relatively conservative in his approach to the teachings that Marpa had passed on, Gampopa was something of an innovator. He even created an alternative, non-tantric version of the Mahāmudrā, which could easily be practiced by a wider variety of people, including ordained monks and nuns. Part of the reason that he chose to present these teachings in a non-tantric way was related to the second innovation he made to Milarepa's paradigm, which was to remain a monk. Being the abbot of a monastery no doubt meant that he was able to enshrine Milarepa's legacy, including his story and songs, in a more stable environment, but it also altered the practice paradigm Milarepa had established. This change created tensions for individual monks, whose institutional existence contrasted with Milarepa's example as a lay hermit. But perhaps more importantly for the telling of Milarepa's tale, it also created tensions between the monks, on the one hand, and on the other the small coteries of tantrikas who continued to lead the lifestyle Milarepa and Rechungpa had exemplified.

Gampopa's and Ngendzong's versions eschew much of this developing tension through their simplicity. They had met Milarepa and received personal instructions from him. Their tellings of his tale read like intimate, almost notational, descriptions of his life, rather than stories with a narrative structure addressed to a wide audience. The probable limits of the authors' intended audience are also evidenced by their decision to omit one of the Milarepa

tradition's most compelling elements: its songs. Neither Gampopa's version nor Ngendzong Repa's fragmentary retelling contains any full songs; both merely reference or introduce songs with which the limited audience for their works is expected to have some familiarity.

While the exclusion of the songs from these early works frustrates attempts to plot their development with as much certainty as concurrent developments in the telling of Milarepa's life story, the referential approach taken by the authors does suggest there was a collection of songs attributed to Milarepa in circulation even at this early stage. It also suggests some details about how they were understood and used. For example, it suggests that the songs were approached as templates to be performed in combination with the telling of Milarepa's tale, rather than poetic compositions fixed on paper. A lasting, stable, literary version of the songs only came about through Tsangnyön's publishing project.

Even then, it is difficult to describe Tsangnyön as the singular "author" of these compositions. The traditional Milarepa songs Tsangnyön arranged are drawn from a pool of performative and literary elements that were part of a broader unfolding tradition. In particular, the songs draw from two earlier poetic performative traditions: the Tibetan songs or *lu* (*glu*) and the tantric Indian Buddhist poetic tradition that made particular use of the *dohā*, *caryagītī*, and *vajragītī* genres. As such, the songs' style is characterized by the nature imagery, sparring, and framing narratives of the early Tibetan *lu* as well as the mixture of bawdy populism and subtle philosophy that characterized the poetry of the Indian tantric *siddhas*. Their general appropriation is, furthermore, frequently combined with specific quotations from the two earlier traditions, a process that additionally problematizes the attribution of the songs to any one "author."

The tradition of appropriation also continued after the songs were widely attributed to Milarepa. Just as his life became paradigmatic for those wishing to live a yogi's life, the songs attributed to him also became paradigmatic for yogis who wanted to express their own realizations. Many later yogi poets copied the format, imagery, and expression of traditional "Milarepa" songs. Gradually, such songs and those that used them as a model came to be known by the honorific word for *lu*, *gur* (*mgur*), and this term was applied as a generic designation to all simply structured songs sung by yogis.

The first redactions of Milarepa's life story to include complete songs were written within one hundred years of Milarepa's life. These works were written by a diverse group of people including the notorious Lama Zhang (1123–93) (1972: f.333–343), and the relatively obscure Drugpa Kagyü teacher Gyalthangpa (Rgyal thang pa, thirteenth century) (1973: 189–265). These authors did not have a personal relationship with Milarepa and aimed their work at an increasingly larger audience. Given the importance the Kagyü lineage placed on personal, student-to-teacher relationships, the authors' reformulation of these texts for a wider audience necessitated a re-envisioning of them so that this relationship remained their focal point. The authors did this in two ways: first, by making sure that the communication between teacher and student is one of the works' central narrative themes; and second, by structuring the texts in such a way that teachers could recite them. The performance of Milarepa's story and songs was therefore brought into the continued and ever-widening direct, oral transmission of the teachings from teacher to student.

While some aspects of the story were retained in this process, others changed. One particularly striking development between these two sets of texts is the character of Milarepa himself: the very human Milarepa of the earlier sources is replaced with a much more otherworldly entity in these later redactions. In Gampopa's version (Sgam po pa bsod nams rin chen 1982: f.30), for example, he relays a self-deprecating story Milarepa told him. In this

story, Milarepa recounts how he fell asleep sitting up with a butter lamp on his head, then assumed the light he saw upon waking was the glow of awakening. In Gyalthanpa and Lama Zhang's version, by contrast, this blunder disappears; their Milarepa does not make mistakes.

This elevation may have come in part through the passing of those who had known Milarepa as a human, but it may also have been a result of the developing competition between the Kagyü and other lineages. Tensions between religious factions existed during the centuries after Milarepa's death, but they were greatly exacerbated by the arrival in Tibet in 1246 of the princes of the Mongol Empire. The princes encouraged sectarian resentments by backing opposing lineages and established the Kagyü's rivals, the Sakya, as Tibet's *de facto* rulers. Some of the more established Kagyü monasteries were less than happy with the Sakya's rise, and in 1285 the monks of Drikung ('Bri gung) Monastery rebelled against the Sakya and their Mongol backers. After this rebellion was ruthlessly quashed, thousands of people were dead, and the state of interlineal relations became fundamentally problematic. With the Sakya firmly in control, other established Kagyü groups, like the Tshalpa and Karma lineages, had to solicit patronage for their monasteries without attracting the direct wrath of the Mongols or Sakyas.

At the same time, on the Tibetan religious scene, several renowned scholars were busy collating and organizing the masses of Buddhist texts and practices that had been transmitted to Tibet in the previous waves of translation. Among these systematizers were Buton Rinchendrub (Bu ston rin chen grub, 1290–1364), Longchenpa (Klong chen pa, 1308–64), and the third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje (1284–1339). The third Karmapa, as head of the Karma Kagyü lineage, managed to combine this collation project with several involuntary trips to the Mongol court, during which he received the patronage of the emperor. While engaged in these activities, he also sponsored the redaction of Milarepa's life stories. This text, which is traditionally attributed to Rangjung Dorje but most probably composed by someone under his direction, was called *The Black Treasury* (*Nag mdzod*) and was the middle of three overlapping collations of Milarepa's story and songs. The first of these was a text called *The Twelve Great Disciples* (*Bu chen bcu gnyis*). *The Black Treasury* is basically this text plus several poetic vignettes from other traditions that were not included within it. These two sources were then later subsumed within another compendium entitled *A River of Blessings* (*Byin brlabs kyi chu rgyun*), which was composed at least fifty years later in the late fourteenth century.

Like the previous texts, these works reflect the tenor of their times. They continue the sectarian promotion of Milarepa as a lineal forebear and, increasingly, as an individual hero in his own right. They also reflect the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries' penchant for collation, comprised as they are of the layers of previous tellings, but without any major attempt to form these layers into a cohesive story. This task would be left to Tsangnyön, who used the biographical compendia as his prototype to establish the tale and the songs' classic and most recognizable form.

CREATING A CLASSIC, CREATING A CULT, MAKING A CRITIQUE

Tsangnyön's retelling of Milarepa's tale became renowned for both its narrative flourish and literary skill. But this renown depended at least as much on the promotional skills of its author as it did on his storytelling abilities. Tsangnyön's project involved not only the composition of these texts, but also their publication and promotion. It required Tsangnyön and his students

to acquire sponsorship to pay for the woodblock prints used to print the texts and the support of Tibet's local chieftains to distribute the copies in their domains. Tsangnyön's genius, then, was not just for literature, but also publication. In some versions of the text he even included images of Milarepa and other Kagyü luminaries so that the treatise could either be revered by itself or used as a visual aid for storytellers. Thus, not only were Milarepa's story and songs to reach a wider audience than most other Tibetan texts before it or since, but cultic reverence for Milarepa, his story, and his songs was also championed.

In its widespread availability and renown, this retelling eclipsed all previous versions of the story. It was, however, very much like them in one important respect. Like all earlier versions of Milarepa's tale, Tsangnyön's retelling had much more to do his own outlook and times than it did with Milarepa's life or times. As DiValerio (2011) has pointed out, Tsangnyön's refashioning of Milarepa's tale was part of his greater project to promote "tantric fundamentalism," a form of tantric practice that eschewed monasticism and philosophy. Primary amongst those whom Tsangnyön understood to have practiced in this way was Milarepa.

Tsangnyön's dislike for monastic institutions and dialectic scholarship was a reaction to what he saw as the negative influence of these two trends in his lifetime. He witnessed the rise of two groups, both of which he distrusted: the monastic and scholarly Gelug lineage, which developed out of the earlier monastic-centred but much less scholastic Kadam lineage and would in time achieve pre-eminence in Tibet; and their rivals the Karma Kagyü, most of whom were also monastics and enjoyed the patronage of Tsang's royal family, the Rinpung (Rin spungs). In many ways, Tsangnyön's version of the story can be read as a critique of both groups.

The most obvious criticism is the aforementioned satire of learned scholars or *geshes* (*dge bshes*), whom Tsangnyön portrays as over-intellectual and even malicious. His presentation of *geshes* in this way is clearly anachronistic. There were Kadam *geshes* during Milarepa's time; Gampopa practiced with several of them before he met Milarepa. But the Kadam *geshes* were much more renowned for their stoicism than their intellectualism.

And while this critique is obvious, there is also a more subtle critique in his storytelling directed against the monastics within the Kagyü tradition, factions like the Karma Kagyü. This critique comes through in both his privileging of Milarepa's non-monastic disciple Rechungpa over Gampopa in the narrative and his privileging of purely tantric practices over the combination of tantric and non-tantric practices that Gampopa promoted.

CREATING A NATIONAL LITERATURE

After the widespread success of Tsangnyön's version, the number of the story's redactions slowed, but this did not mean that people had stopped interacting with it. Within the Kagyü tradition, Milarepa continued to be promoted and revered as a founder and paradigm. Every time the lineage's history was written, or its songs collated, Milarepa's tale was an obligatory inclusion.

Following Tsangnyön's project, and perhaps against his intentions, Milarepa's influence also spread beyond his lineal followers. The extension of his influence seems to have come, perhaps ironically, partly thanks to the Kagyü's defeat in the war that broke out between the competing forces of the Gelug's Central Tibetan and Mongol backers on the one hand, and the Kagyü's – particularly the Karma Kagyü's – Tsang-based sponsors in 1642. This defeat and the subsequent agreement to reinstate the Kagyü lineage as a nonpolitical entity – which was

reached between the 5th Dalai Lama (1617–1682) and the 10th Karmapa, Chöying Dorje (Chos byung rdo rje, 1604–1674) in 1674 – removed much of the sectarian tension that had marked Tsangnyön's works. It also saw many of the texts from dismantled Kagyü monasteries incorporated into the libraries of Gelugpa institutions in Central Tibet. The texts were, therefore, not only de-politicized, they were also more accessible to practitioners from other lineages.

Amdo-based yogi Kalden Gyatso (Skal ldan rgya mtsho, 1606–77) modelled his life and songs on Milarepa during the height of the sectarian conflicts, but after these tensions were nominally resolved, this identification became even more common. Milarepa had become the paradigmatic yogi-poet, and after him, all those who inhabited these twin roles were automatically compared to him. This included people like the famous nineteenth-century yogi-poet Shabkar Tsokdruk Rangdrol (Zhabs dkar tshogs drug rang grol, 1781–1851), who is most closely associated with Nyingma lineages; and even the staunch early twentieth-century Gelugpa Pabongkha Dechen Nyingpo (Pha bong kha bde chen snying po, 1878–1941), who composed *gur* in imitation of Milarepa.

At the same time as Milarepa was becoming more widely revered among Tibetan Buddhism's religious elites, he was also gaining a wider following among ordinary Tibetans. Wandering storytellers and Tibetan operas both told his story, and through these media non-literate Tibetans, who made up the bulk of the population, came to know his story. This burgeoning interest in the saint could also be seen in the pilgrimage routes that developed around places associated with his life in southern Tibet (Quintman 2008).

Later, Milarepa's close association with the Tibetan physical as well as cultural environment meant that he became a symbol for its people as they too travelled further afield. This process can already be evidenced in the interactions between Tibetan traders and non-Tibetan adventurers in Sikkim, Darjeeling, and Kalimpong in the early twentieth century. As Garma C.C. Chang (Tsangnyön Heruka 1989: 689) relates in an afterword to his translation of Tsangnyön's version of the Milarepa story, he was encouraged to translate this work by a wealthy and respected Tibetan woman, who told him it was one of her people's "greatest treasures."

The national identification with him is most obvious, however, among those who travelled into exile in India and the West after the events of 1959. Among this group, Milarepa was particularly heavily promoted by Kagyü teachers like Chögyam Trungpa (who emulated and admired his poetry) and Kalu Rinpoche (who was seen as his embodiment) in the United States and Europe during the 1970s and 1980s. But he was also promoted and publicly venerated by non-Kagyü teachers in a variety of publications and gatherings. In his efforts to eliminate sectarianism and promote cohesion amongst the disparate Tibetan lineages, the present Dalai Lama, for example, has given mass public teachings on Milarepa's songs on a number of occasions, and even famously broke down in tears as he described Milarepa's austerities.

Milarepa has also provided Tibetan nationalists outside of Tibet with a figurehead in their attempts to create and promote a national Tibetan literature. No mention of Tibetan literature, it seems, can be complete without reference to him. An edition published in 1999 that combined *The Life* and *The Hundred Thousand Songs* into one small book, entitled *The Life and Songs of the Lord Yogi Milarepa* (*rNal 'byor gyi dbang phyug chen po mi la ras pa'i rnam mgur*), has been a best-seller for the Tibetan Government-in-Exile's publishing house.

Within Tibet, Milarepa's story suffered the same fate during the Cultural Revolution as other parts of Tibetan culture, but he was also one of the first elements of the culture to be revived after this catastrophe. Dungkar Lozang Trinlé (Dung dkar blo bzang 'phrin las,

1927–97) included examples from Milarepa's work in his seminal modern Tibetan poetry of 1982, *Opening the Door to the Study of Ornamentation for Writing Poetry* (*Snyan ngag la 'jug tshul tshig rgyan rig pa'i sgo 'byed*). Milarepa was also a major topic of research for Dungkar Lozang Trinlé's star pupil, the poet and historian Döndrup Gyal (Don grub rgyal, 1953–85). Döndrup Gyal, who is often referred to as the founder of modern Tibetan poetry, wrote his master's thesis on Milarepa's poetry and later expanded this work into an extensive history of the *gur* and *lu* tradition (Don grub rgyal 1997). In these works he not only presented a Marxist analysis of Milarepa's songs but also argued that the *gur*, including those attributed to Milarepa, are an example of an indigenous Tibetan literature that had been ignored through the Tibetans' preference for poetry imported from India. This critique of what he viewed as cultural imperialism could also be read as an indirect criticism of the pervasive influence of Chinese culture in Tibet. Once again, but this time in a very different context, Milarepa and his songs had become a marker of a contested cultural identity.

TRAVELLING TALES

Milarepa's life story and songs may have thus become symbols of Tibetanness, but people from many other cultures have also embraced them in a variety of ways. The first translation of his story and songs was probably into Mongolian in 1618, and this was followed by a French translation of *The Life* by Jacques Bacot (1925). The first English translation was completed by the Sikkimese scholar Kazi Dawa-Samdup, who worked on it between 1902 and 1917, but it was not published until W.Y. Evans-Wentz acquired it from his family after his death in 1924 (Evans-Wentz 2000). Following this publication, *The Life* was translated into Japanese and Chinese before a new English translation by Lobsang Lhalungpa replaced Kazi's work, which contained many faults, in 1977. Andrew Quintman has recently revisited this work in a new, erudite, and accessible translation (Tsangnyön Heruka 2010). Quintman's work not only updates the language in which the tale is told but, as its translator's forward explains, also corrects the occasional errors in Lhalungpa's rendering of technical Buddhist terminology.

In this way, then, Tsangnyön's *The Life* has been repeatedly translated and published around the world. Strangely, its accompanying work, *The Hundred Thousand Songs*, has received much less attention. Tsangnyön's version of the *Songs* has only been translated and published in full once, in 1962 by Garma C.C. Chang. Chang himself suggests in his appendix that this should be viewed as a preliminary translation (1989: 687), and there are indeed many problems with it. Perhaps the most glaring of these is his tendency to employ gender-specific terms in English that are not included in the source document. One example of this is his decision to translate the Tibetan word *Kalden* (*skal ldan*) differently for men and women. To render this word, which is commonly translated as "fortunate" he chose the term "well-endowed" when it described men and "lucky" when it described women.

Earlier, pre-Tsangnyön redactions of Milarepa's life story have been translated even less. Quintman (2013) included a translation of Gampopa's work as an appendix in his recent study of the Milarepa biographical tradition. His unpublished doctoral thesis (2006) includes a translation of *The Twelve Great Disciples*. Some of the songs have been published in truncated redactions, including a group of songs that were circulating in Amdo but were not included in Tsangnyön's collation (Lama Kunga and Cutillo 1995).

Despite the patchwork nature of this translation project, the concurrent exchange of ideas between Tibetan, Chinese, Indian, and Western scholars that it represents has also brought

on the latest instalment in the tale's tale. In this episode, Tibetans and non-Tibetans have been engaging and continue to engage with Milarepa's story in a multitude of ways. Several Milarepa comic books have been produced, along with Tibetan, Indian, and Italian films about his life. New York hip-hop group the Beastie Boys named a charity after him, *The Milarepa Fund*, and professional snowboarder Jamie Lynn marketed a series of Milarepa-inspired snowboards in the 1990s.

Western academics have also begun reappraising his work. In 2013, Andrew Quintman published a detailed cultural history of Milarepa's life story from Gampopa to Tsangnyön. And while no similar analysis has been conducted on the Milarepa songs or other periods of the tradition's history, there have been several shorter studies of his work, including a structuralist reading (Powers 1992), a feminist reading of it (Campbell 1996), and a study of what the Milarepa tradition has to say about beer (Ardussi 1977).

CODA

In January 2010, in Bodhgaya India, the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts (TIPA), from Dharamsala, presented what the promoters called "the largest theatrical event in Tibetan history." It was the staging of the 17th Karmapa, Orgyen Trinley's reworking of Milarepa's *Life*, which he had written in contemporary colloquial Tibetan. Twenty thousand people turned out to see it.[3] In this one event, echoes of all the previous episodes of Milarepa's life were represented. It was a contemporary reinterpretation of the tale, promoted by collaboration between one of his lineal descendants and a nationalist organization dedicated to the preservation of Tibetan culture. In the audience were Tibetans from exile and inside Tibet, visiting Chinese and Western Buddhists, and quite a few local Indians. Over 900 years after Milarepa's life ended, his story continues.

NOTES

1 This abbreviated version of Tsangnyön Heruka's version of the Milarepa tale is informed by Andrew Quintman's recent translation of Tsangnyön's similar work, published in 2010 by Penguin Books as *The Life of Milarepa*.
2 This translation differs from Quintman (2010: 178) and Lhalungpa (1977: 153).
3 Information about this event is available online at: http://www.Kagyümonlam.org/english/news/Report/Report_20100101_1.html

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TSONGKHAPA

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John Powers

INTRODUCTION

Losang Drakba (bLo bzang grags pa, 1357–1419) was born in the Tsongkha Valley of Amdo, and is popularly referred to as Tsongkhapa, "Man from Tsongkha." Members of the Gelukpa, the order he founded, also refer to him as Je Rinpoche, "Glorious Precious Jewel." He was one of the great reformers of Tibetan Buddhism and is renowned for his erudition, his meditative accomplishments, and for reforming monastic practice.

As is true of other prominent religious figures, Tsongkhapa's life is the subject of legends and pious embellishments. Some details of his biography can with qualified confidence be regarded as factual, but much of his story emphasizes mythological elements and his interactions with buddhas, bodhisattvas, and luminaries living and dead. The most important of these figures is Mañjuśrī (Tib. 'Jam dpal), the celestial bodhisattva who personifies the wisdom of all buddhas. According to Gelukpa tradition, Tsongkhapa was an emanation of Mañjuśrī and throughout his life received personal instructions from the great bodhisattva. This is one reason why members of his order regard his writings and interpretations of Buddhist doctrine as uniquely authoritative.

SOURCES

Tsongkhapa's standard biographies belong to the "records of liberation" (*rnam thar*) genre, which is concerned with religiously significant details of a person's life: teachers he met, initiations he received, retreats, signs of success (including meditative breakthroughs, visions, and visits by deceased masters, buddhas, and bodhisattvas), efforts to promote the Dharma, and how he met and trained his main students. Religious biographies are commonly written by the subject's closest students. For Geluk tradition, Kedrupje's (mKhas grub rje dGe legs dpal bzang, 1385–1438) *Entry into Faith: Wondrous Biography of the Great Lama Tsongkhapa* (Kedrupje 1979a) and *An Account Expressing a Small Part of the Oceanic Secret Biography of Je Rinpoche* (Kedrupje 1979b) are regarded as definitive accounts, along with Jambel Gyatso's ('Jam dpal rgya mtsho, 1356–1428) *Compendium of Biographical Statements: Supplement to the Extensive Biography of the Great Tsongkhapa* (Jambel Gyatso 1979).

These accounts emphasize several main themes: (1) Tsongkhapa's entry into the world was prophesied by buddhas and bodhisattvas, and his birth was accompanied by a multitude of miraculous events; (2) his teachings were certified by his omniscient mentor Mañjuśrī and thus are definitive; (3) he had direct and ongoing contact with the leading sources of Indian Buddhism, and so his pronouncements are part of a continuum dating back to Śākyamuni Buddha and accord with the views of the great Indian masters; and (4) Tsongkhapa was the greatest Tibetan exponent of the Dharma; his life and works are a testament to Tibetan mastery of Buddhism. In this narrative, Tsongkhapa becomes a symbol of Tibetan confidence, a paradigmatic figure who studied widely, mastered all aspects of Buddhist lore, and outshone his contemporaries in his prodigious efforts and his comprehension of both esoteric and exoteric subjects. The system he developed is characterized as a brilliant synthesis of the Buddha's thought and the insights of the great Indian luminaries of the tradition, and also as a testament to Tibetan greatness.

THE BACKSTORY

The future Tsongkhapa's path to sainthood began in a previous life in which he met Śākyamuni Buddha and presented him with a crystal rosary. In response, the Buddha gave the boy a conch shell and told his attendant Ānanda that a consequence of this meritorious action would be a future life as a great religious figure in Tibet. The prophecy further indicated that the boy would be named Losang Drakba and would found a monastery that would become a preeminent center for study and practice. Losang Drakba would also present a crown to an image of the Buddha in Lhasa and would cause Buddhist teachings to flourish in the Land of Snows.

This story links the future Tsongkhapa with the past Buddha and is part of a subnarrative in biographical sources that emphasizes a lengthy training period punctuated by encounters with eminent figures of Indian Buddhism, who provide instructions and certify his deep comprehension of the Dharma. Over the course of millennia, Tsongkhapa engaged in prodigious acts of merit-making, spent lengthy periods in solitary retreat, and regularly met with the greatest masters of India and Tibet, often in visionary encounters. In the *Supplement*, Tsongkhapa is reported to have explicitly linked his past gift to the Buddha and his subsequent commitment to practice: "Previously in Bodh Gaya I presented prayer beads of white crystal to Śākyamuni Buddha. One partial result of this has been my generation of the mind of awakening (*byang chub kyi sems*; Skt. *bodhicitta*)" (Jambel Gyatso 1979: 164.5).[1]

This initial act set in motion a series of causally connected events that led him to become a bodhisattva. The dawning of the mind of awakening is regarded as the inception of the bodhisattva path. From this point, Tsongkhapa cultivated the perfections (*pha rol tu phyin pa*; Skt. *pāramitā*: generosity, ethics, patience, effort, concentration, and wisdom) that when fully developed constitute the core of the awakened personality of a buddha. His biographies report that along the way he encountered eminent teachers. These meetings serve to establish the orthodoxy of Tsongkhapa's interpretations of Buddhist doctrines and indicate that with his birth the authentic Dharma was fully transplanted to Tibet.

Miraculous events surrounding birth are a recurring element in Tibetan religious biographies, and the setting is an important element. These narratives are replete with power tropes – literary elements that set the subject apart and that serve to establish his (and less often her) outstanding character. One such element is lineage: as with accounts of the Buddha's life, biographies of Tsongkhapa devote considerable attention to extolling his

parents, their religiosity, and their efforts to promote the Dharma. Jambel Gyatso reports that Tsongkhapa selected his future parents because they were outstanding Buddhist practitioners of unimpeachably virtuous character.

> The birth of the omniscient Je Rinpoche took place in eastern Tsong Province. His father and mother were devout and compassionate and had worked to establish the excellent doctrine [in their region].
>
> (Jambel Gyatso 1979: 145)

Tsongkhapa's conception was presaged by a number of auspicious dreams that indicated the fortunate couple would be the physical instruments through which a great religious figure would come into the world:

> Toward the end of the year of the monkey [approximately nine months before his birth], his father had a dream. In this dream, a monk who said he had come from the Five Peaked Mountain [Wutaishan, traditionally believed to be the abode of Mañjuśrī] arrived carrying a book. He wore finely stitched monk's robes adorned with many garlands of flowers and had a lower robe that appeared to be fashioned from the yellow silk called "three leafy branches."
>
> "I wish to stay with you," he said, and after he spoke he reappeared on top of the house inside a temple. As a result of this portent, the father offered fervent prayers [to Mañjuśrī] and believed that the child would be an emanation of Mañjuśrī.
>
> Following this Je Rinpoche's mother had a dream in which she stood in a valley of flowers. She sat in the middle of a thousand women in rows. A boy dressed in white came from the east carrying a vase. A girl dressed in red came from the west carrying a bunch of peacock flowers in her right hand and a large mirror in her left. They discussed the thousand women; the boy asked the girl: "Is this one suitable or unsuitable?" But the girl found some flaw in every one of them. Then the boy pointed a finger at Je Rinpoch's mother. "Is she suitable?" he asked. The girl, laughing, replied: "She is suitable."
>
> When she awoke, there were many positive signs. Her body felt light and her mind was blissful. She wondered: "What are these signs? Should I doubt them?" From this day onward, their neighbors and fellow villagers began experiencing dreams in which many marvelous things occurred. For example, many monks appeared in the statue of Atiśa [in Lhasa] and invited [the villagers to enter]. The sun, moon, and stars all dawned at the same time and flowers rained from the sky. The smell of incense perfumed the air, and the sky rang with sounds of music. The earth quaked. All of south and central Tibet was aware of this. Then on the tenth evening of the first month of the year of the bird, Je Rinpoche's mother had another dream. In this dream she saw an uncountable contingent of monks and nuns holding victory banners and innumerable musical instruments including great drums and so forth. They declared that they planned to host a reception for the arrival of Avalokiteśvara (Tib. sPyan ras gzigs).

The frequent references to central Tibet are significant: the region in which Tsongkhapa was born lies at the periphery of the Tibetan Buddhist world. His village is situated on one side of a high pass; on the other side the residents are primarily ethnic Tibetans, but his village is located on a long slope that descends to areas that are mainly Chinese. The

references to events in central Tibet in anticipation of his birth configure him as a pan-Tibetan figure and presage his future activities, which mainly occurred in the central regions.

Jambel Gyatso further elaborates on Tsongkhapa's mother's visionary experiences. She saw a golden statue of Avalokiteśvara as large as a mountain in a valley filled with clouds. Another important power trope is the retinue that populates the narrative: gods, goddesses, and other marvelous beings surrounded the statue, and the air was filled with the sound of Buddhist doctrine. The statue descended and gradually shrank in size and then hovered above the top of her head. It then dissolved into her body along with the reception committee. She visualized herself prostrating and circumambulating the statue. This sparked a feeling of happiness and mental clarity, following which she remained constantly focused on veneration of Avalokiteśvara without having to consciously resolve to do so. The setting and details serve to confirm the impression that an event of global significance is about to occur and that the central figure – still in the background but dominating the narrative – will be uniquely important.

This part of the dream sequence is significant for the later embellishment of Tsongkhapa's persona in the Geluk tradition. The initial dream configures him as an emanation of Mañjuśrī, the embodiment of wisdom, and this serves to give him an aura of omniscient authority. By claiming that the great master was also an embodiment of Avalokiteśvara, Jambel Gyatso portrays him as possessing fully developed compassion, the other major aspect of the matrix of a buddha's awakened mind. But he goes even further: in the next sequence of the narrative, a golden *vajra* (Tib. *rdo rje*, the symbol of tantric Buddhism, indicative of supreme magical power) dissolves into Tsongkhapa's mother, and his father remarks that it was thrown by Vajrapāṇi (Tib. Phyag na rdo rje, who personifies the power of buddhas). Jambel Gyatso reports that the father awoke and exclaimed: "Our child will be powerful!"

Shortly before the birth, Tsongkhapa's mother had another dream in which a retinue of monks and nuns arrived and indicated that they wished to venerate the golden temple. The boy in white appeared and opened a small golden door in the mother's breast, revealing the golden statue of Avalokiteśvara. This element is probably a resonance with popular narratives of the Buddha's life including the *Extensive Sport* (*Lalita-vistara*), which describe how he lived in a crystal casket inside his mother; this shielded him from the polluting substances in her body. During her pregnancy, gods and other powerful beings came to worship and were able to view the infant inside her upper torso. As with the Buddha's story, the statue inside Tsongkhapa's mother is cleaned by the visitors. In Tsongkhapa's case, the girl in red notes that it has become dusty and she pours water over it, following which she dusts it with peacock feathers. This is followed by the sound of chanting in Sanskrit (symbolic of his later mastery of Indic Buddhist lore). The next morning a large star arose in the sky and Tsongkhapa was delivered without causing his mother any discomfort (also an element in the Buddha's birth narratives).

Tsongkhapa's biographies report that his family pursued a nomadic lifestyle. His mother was named Shingsa Achö (Shing bza' A chos), and his father was Lubümgé (kLu 'bum dge). Following the delivery, a drop of blood fell from the umbilical cord onto the ground (in another account Lubümgé buried the afterbirth), and a sandalwood tree quickly grew on the spot. Its leaves bore the seed syllables of the future buddha Siṃhanāda (Tib. Seng ge sgra); according to Geluk tradition, in a future life Tsongkhapa will be that buddha. His mother built a stūpa (Tib. *mchod rten*) on the spot in 1379. Later a hermitage was established there, which grew into a monastery named Kumbum (sKu 'bum). The monastery received

its name from the sandalwood tree, which had 100,000 leaves (sKu 'bum tsan dan). Following a visit from the third Dalai Lama, Sönam Gyatso (bSod nams rgya mtsho, 1543–1588), the complex was substantially expanded, and it later became one of the major teaching institutions of eastern Tibet.

RELIGIOUS TRAINING

From an early age the boy demonstrated a precocious aptitude for religious activities. At the age of three he received initiation from the fourth Gyelwa Karmapa, Rolbe Dorje (rGyal dbang Karma pa Rol pa'i rdo rje, 1340–1383), who gave him the name Günga Nyingbo (Kun dga' snying po). At age seven Chöje Töndrup Rinchen (Chos rje Don grub rin chen, 1309–1385) gave him novice (*dge tshul*; Skt. *śrāmaṇera*) monastic vows and the ordination name Losang Drakba. Töndrup Rinchen initiated him into the tantric practice of Vajrabhairava (Tib. rDo rje 'jigs byed), and Tsongkhapa's secret biography reports that at age seven he experienced visions of Vajrapāṇi and the Indian master Atiśa (982–1054).

His biographies state that Tsongkhapa traveled all over Tibet and studied with lamas belonging to a variety of lineages. When he was sixteen, he left Amdo for central Tibet (dBus-gTsang), and he subsequently received instructions from more than fifty teachers. His early studies emphasized philosophical traditions that had been imported from India as well as tantric literature and practice. His main affiliation was with the first Buddhist order established in Tibet, the Kadampa (bKa' gdams pa, "Scriptures and Precepts"), which was founded by Dromdön Gyelwe Jungne ('Brom ston rGyal ba'i 'byung gnas, 1008–1064), a student of Atiśa. The order Tsongkhapa founded was initially referred to as the "New Kadampa" and later became generally known as Geluk (dGe lugs, "System of Virtue").

Tsongkhapa's main teacher was the Sakya (Sa skya) scholar Rendawa (Red mda' ba gZhon nu blo gros, 1349–1412), who instructed him in Buddhist philosophy and in the theory and practice of tantra. His autobiography, *Account of Auspicious Preparations* (*rTogs brjod mdun legs ma*), reports that he fully mastered the "Five Treatises of Maitreya" (Byams chos sde lnga) and related works by Asaṅga (ca. fourth century) and his brother Vasubandhu, as well as treatises on epistemology by Dignāga (ca. sixth century) and Dharmakīrti (ca. seventh century) and Nāgārjuna's (ca. 150–250) Madhyamaka system. The autobiography emphasizes his deep devotion to Rendawa, in whose memory he composed his famous poem *Aiming at Loving Kindness* (*dMigs brtse ma*). Rendawa reportedly felt that it more accurately described Tsongkhapa and offered it back to him. It is regarded by Gelukpas as one of the best ways to invoke the great lama's blessings.

In addition to scholastic subjects, Tsongkhapa devoted considerable effort to mastering tantric lore. His tantric lamas included: Chenga Sönam Gyeltsen (sPyan snga rin po che bSod nams rgyal mtshan, 1378–1466), a Drigüng ('Bri gung) master who had received transmission of the "six dharmas of Nāropa" (*nā ro chos drug*); Chokle Namgyel (Phyogs las rnam rgyal, 1306–1386) of the Bodong lineage, who initiated him into the "Wheel of Time" (Dus kyi 'khor lo; Skt. Kālacakra) cycle; the Sakya master Rinchen Dorje (Rin chen rdo rje, d.u.), who gave him "path and result" (*lam 'bras*) instructions derived from the *Hevajra-tantra* (Tib. *Kye rdo rje rgyud*); Khyüngbo Hleba Shönnu Sönam (Khyung po lhas pa gZhon nu bsod nams, d.u.), who provided instructions on the "Secret Assembly" (gSang ba 'dus pa; Skt. Guhyasamāja) cycle; and Lama Damba Sönam Gyeltsen (bLa ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan, 1312–1375), who initiated him into the body *maṇḍala* (*lus dkyil*) of Heruka Cakrasaṃvara (Khrag 'thung 'khor lo bde mchog). In addition to these studies of

highest yoga tantra (*rnal 'byor bla na med kyi rgyud*; Skt. *anuttara-yoga-tantra*), Tsongkhapa also devoted considerable attention to the "lower tantras" (action tantra, performance tantra, and yoga tantra), and these were integral to his mature tantric system, according to which the Buddha provided a graduated succession of teachings, each of which is designed to benefit a certain type of practitioner.

Another important influence was Umapa Bawo Dorje (dBu ma pa dPa' bo rdo rje, d.u.), a Kagyü (bKa' brgyud) lama Tsongkhapa met when he was 53. Tsongkhapa had recently completed his influential study of Madhyamaka, *Golden Garland of Good Explanations* (*Legs bshad gser phreng*, a commentary on the *Ornament for Clear Realizations* [*Abhisamayālaṃkāra*], attributed to Maitreya) and began study of Candrakīrti's (ca. seventh century) *Entry into the Middle Way* (*dBu ma la 'jug pa*; Skt. *Madhyamakāvatāra*) with Umapa. Initially the lama served as a conduit between Tsongkhapa and Mañjuśrī: he would pose questions to the bodhisattva on behalf of his student, but later Tsongkhapa began to experience visions, following which he was able to communicate directly. Mañjuśrī also conferred tantric empowerments for practices relating to him and to his wrathful form of Vajrabhairava.

Kedrupje's *Secret Biography* reports one such event, which occurred during a meditative retreat in 1394 that is notable for its equal emphasis on the spectacular nature of Tsongkhapa's mystical visions and on the practical content of the bodhisattva's instructions:

> Then we directly perceived Lord Mañjuśrī's body. He was huge and magnificent, surrounded by a retinue of countless buddhas and bodhisattvas, as well as manifestations of many [Indian] scholars: Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Buddhapālita, Nāgabodhi, Candrakīrti, Asaṅga and his brother [Vasubandhu], Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, Guṇaprabha and Śākyaprabha, Devendrabuddhi, Śāntarakṣita, Kamalaśīla, Abhaya, and so forth. We also directly perceived the manifestations of many great adepts: King Indrabhūti, the great brahman Saraha, the great master Lūyipa, Ghaṇṭapāda, Kṛṣṇācārya, and so forth.
>
> In consideration of a time when there would be no further mystical visions, Lord Mañjuśrī spoke as before: "You must accomplish your most difficult aims, because there is no liberation in mystical visions. Instead, rely on the texts of these [masters] so that you may produce an ocean of benefit for yourself and others."
>
> Then we perceived the terrifying face of Yamāntaka [a wrathful aspect of Mañjuśrī]. He was huge and magnificent, with a full complement of faces and arms. Following this, our practice of self-generation of Yamāntaka took place every day without interruption. Also, in that place as before, we directly perceived a mystical vision of the body of Lord Mañjuśrī. He touched the hilt of his sword to his heart and pricked Je Rinpoche's heart with the tip of his blade. A stream of nectar flowed from Mañjuśrī's heart along the blade into Je Rinpoche's heart. The nectar was white and gold in color, like the colors of a very oily river. It entered into Je Rinpoche; the nectar in his heart caused limitless great bliss to fill his entire body, so that he could not speak.
>
> (Kedrupje 1979b: 179.2–180.2)[2]

Mañjuśrī's warning about the limited timetable for such visions is significant: Buddhist literature in Tibet is replete with similar accounts, but there is often an accompanying subtext that warns against becoming attached to such spectacular experiences and losing sight of the ultimate goal of awakening (*byang chub*; Skt. *bodhi*). The *Secret Biography* reports that full realization of Mañjuśrī's instructions did not occur until Tsongkhapa was 39.

While he was sleeping, Je Rinpoche traveled to the celestial realm [of Tuṣita], where Mañjuśrī delivered a penetrating analysis of the view of the Consequence (Prāsaṅgika) and Autonomy (Svātantrika) schools. When he awoke in the hermitage of Ramo, although he had been given these teachings, Je Rinpoche could not generate the ascertainment that utterly overturns mistaken notions regarding ultimate points of doctrine. Remaining in retreat there, Je Rinpoche and his retinue of lamas stayed together, offering numerous prayers. As a result of these efforts, one night Je Rinpoche had a significant dream. He dreamed that the master Nāgārjuna and his four spiritual sons [Āryadeva, Bhāvaviveka, Buddhapālita, and Candrakīrti] were debating fine points of doctrine regarding the existence or nonexistence of own-being (*rang bzhin*; Skt. *svabhāva*). Je Rinpoche recognized Buddhapālita among the group of debaters by the *paṇḍita*'s blue skin and large body. Buddhapālita approached Je Rinpoche with a text in his hand. He blessed him [with the text]. This was a sign [that Tsongkhapa would experience full realization].

Later, he re-read Buddhapālita's *Commentary on* [*Nāgārjuna's*] *Fundamental Treatise on the Middle Way*. Without effort, Je Rinpoche developed certain ascertainment unlike any he had previously experienced regarding the fine points of the Consequence School and the limits of the object of negation, and he dispelled without remainder all mistaken grasping after signs [of inherent existence] and all superimpositions that reach conclusions other than the meaning of suchness.

(Kedrupje 1979b: 184.5–185.6)

This episode contains several significant elements, including Tsongkhapa's struggles to fully understand the Madhyamaka view. It implies that after this dream he attained direct intuitive realization of emptiness (*stong pa nyid*; Skt. *śūnyatā*), which is a characteristic of the supramundane path of seeing (*mthong lam*; Skt. *darśana-mārga*). It also emphasizes that even though Je Rinpoche was an emanation of the bodhisattva of wisdom and received personal tutoring from the greatest luminaries of Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, his attainments were the result of prodigious effort over the course of millennia. Success required hard work and his path involved uncertainty. This serves as a warning to others who might imagine that attainment of awakening can be easy or quick (which is a theme in some Tibetan traditions). Even a supremely gifted practitioner – one prophesied by the Buddha – experienced setbacks and needed a sustained effort to achieve his religious goals. This also implies that his eventual conclusions were certified by unimpeachable sources of authority. Introducing the greatest luminaries of Indian Buddhism to the process transfers their charisma to Tsongkhapa and demonstrates for his followers that his system is fully in accord with orthodoxy.

TSONGKHAPA'S MADHYAMAKA SYSTEM

Tsongkhapa's understanding of emptiness is central to his Madhyamaka philosophy. He asserts that emptiness is a "nonaffirming negative" (*med dgag*; Skt. *prasajya-pratiṣedha*), meaning that it is simply a denial of something falsely imagined (i.e., inherent existence) that does not imply anything in its place. The goal of related meditation is to utterly remove this false conception, which is the major impediment to attainment of supramundane realizations. This view is commonly referred to as "self-emptiness" (*rang stong*) and is opposed to the "other-emptiness" (*gzhan stong*) view championed by Dolpopa Sherap

Gyeltsen (Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan, 1292–1361), which is held by most contemporary non-Geluk lineages, particularly in the Kagyü and Nyingma (rNying ma) orders. Dolpopa and the Jonang order that followed his teachings asserted the true existence of a positive, self-existent entity, the "matrix of buddhas" (*de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po*; Skt. *tathāgata-garbha*), conceived as an inherent buddha-nature that is made manifest by meditative practice (see the chapter by Duckworth in this volume).

According to Tsongkhapa's understanding of the path, acquisition of the qualities and realizations that contribute to attainment of buddhahood is a gradual process. One newly develops realizations and attributes that are the result of training. The other-emptiness view holds that mind is empty of qualities that are other than those of buddhas and that practice involves actualizing this innate potential. The matrix of buddhas truly exists, and it is described as subtle, ineffable, permanent, and beyond the grasp of conceptual thought. It is the luminous essence of the mind, which is primordially untainted by afflictions. As the sky is not altered when clouds move across it, so also the nature of mind is not really defiled by adventitious (*glo bur*; Skt. *āgantuka*) afflictions.

Tsongkhapa regarded this as a profoundly mistaken – and non-Buddhist – view; he characterized it as version of Indian brahmanism, which posits an unchanging, truly existent entity that pervades all reality and that is individually manifest in all beings. In his *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path to Awakening* (*Byang chub lam rim chen mo*), he wrote:

> Such assertions lie outside the sphere of all the scriptures of the Greater and Lesser Vehicles because they [viz., the Jonangbas] accept that it is not necessary to eliminate the conception of self that is the fundamental factor that binds beings in cyclic existence; and that the bases that are apprehended by this [conception] as self are these [phenomena] realized as nonexistent by nature. Thus, without overcoming that, they assert that the conception of self is overcome through realizing some other phenomenon unrelated to that [conception of self] as true.
>
> (Losang Drakba 1985: 650)

For Tsongkhapa, the "sudden awakening" held out to naïve practitioners by proponents of other-emptiness is simply fantasy. These teachings were widely popular in the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries in Tibet, and refuting them was one of his primary objectives. He regarded their systems as riddled with self-contradictions and as contrary to normative doctrines stemming from the Buddha and elaborated by Indian luminaries. He pointed out that advocates of this view recognized that one must overcome the conception of inherent existence in order to attain liberation, but instead of directly attacking it – which he viewed as a precondition for attaining higher realizations – they focus on realizing an unrelated phenomenon: buddha-nature.

> This [view] is no different from someone who conceives that there is a snake in the east and who becomes fearful, and [someone else] who thinks that the fear cannot be overcome by thinking of the snake in the east and instead says, "Think on the fact that in the west there is a tree. By this means, you will eradicate your conception of a snake in the room and will overcome your fear."
>
> (Losang Drakba 1985: 650)

For Tsongkhapa, the snake in the room is the false conception of inherent existence. It cannot be eliminated by ignoring it and turning one's attention elsewhere. It must be directly confronted because it has been cultivated and strengthened through innumerable lifetimes. Only prodigious training can weaken and gradually eliminate it. The fantasy of innate buddha-nature is irrelevant to the core existential problem and is a counterproductive distraction.

TSONGKHAPA'S LEGACY

Tsongkhapa's literary output was prodigious. His written works fill twelve volumes in the Tibetan canon. He discussed a wide spectrum of Buddhist topics and was particularly concerned with reforming monastic practice and countering false views. His three most influential works are: (1) *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path to Awakening*, a comprehensive treatment of the traditional Mahāyāna Buddhist path to buddhahood conceived in hierarchically arranged stages; (2) *Great Exposition of Mantra* (*sNgags rim chen mo*), which presents a similarly graduated tantric path to buddhahood; and (3) *The Essence of Good Explanations* (*Legs bshad snying po*), a discussion of Buddhist hermeneutics in accordance with the Indian Yogācāra and Madhyamaka schools).

His *Three Principal Aspects of the Path* (*Lam gtso rnam gsum*) is also a popular short condensation of the main features of the Buddhist path. It is a short verse work that outlines the common path of sūtra and tantra. The three aspects are: (1) the intention definitely to leave cyclic existence; (2) the altruistic intention to attain awakening in order to benefit others; and (3) the correct view of emptiness, which involves direct realization of the absence of inherent existence in persons and phenomena.

> Without a pure intention to escape [cyclic existence],
> There is no way to stop seeking pleasant effects in the ocean of cyclic existence;
> Also, yearning for existence thoroughly binds the embodied.
> Thus, initially, seek renunciation.
> Leisure and fortune are difficult to find and life does not last.
> Through familiarizing the mind [with these facts], reverse emphasis on the appearances
>   of this life.
> If one thinks again and again about karma's inevitable effects and the sufferings of
>   cyclic existence,
> Emphasis on future lives is reversed. …
> Moreover, if the intention to leave cyclic existence is not conjoined with the pure mind
>   of awakening,
> Then it will not become the cause of the wondrous bliss of highest awakening.
> Thus, the intelligent will generate the supreme mind of awakening.
> Those carried along the continuum of the four fierce and powerful rivers,
> Bound by means of tight bonds of action that are difficult to reverse,
> Who have entered into the iron net of inherently existent self,
> And are covered with the great darkness of ignorance,
> Are born into limitless cyclic existence,
> And during their lives are tortured without interruption by the three sufferings.
> Contemplating the condition of our former mothers in such a state, generate the supreme
>   mind of awakening.

If one does not have the wisdom realizing the mode of existence,
Then, even though one has developed the mind of awakening and renunciation,
One is not able to sever the root of cyclic existence.
Thus, in order to achieve that, strive for the method of realizing dependent arising.
Whoever sees the cause and effect of all phenomena of cyclic existence and nirvana as
    completely inevitable,
And thoroughly destroys the observed object
Will enter the path that pleases the Buddha. …
When you have realized just as they are
The essentials of the three principal aspects of the path,
Resort to solitude and generate the power of effort.
Quickly accomplish your final aim, my son!

<div align="right">(Losang Drakba n.d.: 435–38)</div>

In addition to his literary activities, Tsongkhapa's biographies emphasize outstanding works that benefitted others and served to propagate the Dharma, solitary retreats, and debates with Buddhists who held rival views. He is credited with four great actions: (1) establishing the annual "Great Aspiration Festival" (sMon lam chen mo); (2) restoring an important statue of Maitreya (Tib. Byams pa); (3) championing strict observance of monastic discipline; and (4) construction of several major monasteries. In 1392, together with a group of eight disciples, he began a long retreat at Chadrel (Bya bral) Hermitage and after several years moved to Ölka Chölüng ('Ol kha chos lung). During this period, he reportedly performed 500,000 prostrations. After this he moved to Dzingji ('Dzing ji), where he refurbished the statue of Maitreya.

In 1402, while residing at Reting (Rwa sgreng) Monastery, he composed his magnum opus, the *Great Exposition of the Stages of the Path to Awakening*, and later that same year performed the second of his great deeds. During a rainy season residence at Namsedeng (rNam rtsed ldeng) Monastery, together with Rendawa and Kyabchok Belsangbo (sKyabs mchog dPal bzang po, d.u.) he delivered an extensive commentary on the rules of monastic discipline ('dul ba; Skt. vinaya) to a large group of monks. This is credited with sparking a revival of adherence to the vinaya among Tibetan monastics.

As his fame spread, Tsongkhapa became a Buddhist celebrity. In 1408 the Yongle 永乐 emperor (1360–1424) invited him to visit the imperial court at Nanjing, but Tsongkhapa declined. Another invitation was delivered in 1413; this time he sent his student Shagya Yeshe (Sha kya ye shes, 1354–1435) in his stead. Shagya Yeshe received titles and gifts, and when he returned to Tibet his newly acquired wealth enabled him to found Sera Monastery in 1419.

In 1409 Tsongkhapa initiated the Great Aspiration Festival with the support of the Pakmo Druba ruler Drakpa Gyeltsen (Grags pa rgyal mtshan, 1374–1432). It began at the Tibetan New Year (Lo gsar) and involved both monks and laypeople. It encompassed a range of religious activities, including prayer, prostrations, and lectures by eminent lamas. Traditionally Geluk monasteries held examinations for their highest ecclesiastic degree, that of *geshe* (*dge bshes*), during this period. Monks performed public *'cham* dances in which religious themes were enacted. The culmination was a celebration on the full moon day in the Jokhang, Tibet's holiest shrine. The image of Jowo Rinpoche was worshipped, offerings were made, and thousands of butter lamps were lit. This was one of Tibet's major religious events until it was banned by the Chinese in the 1950s.

In 1410 Tsongkhapa founded Ganden Monastery (dGa' ldan dgon pa), which grew to become one of the three main seats of the Geluk order. At its height it was the largest monastery in Tibet, and perhaps the world. Prior to the Chinese invasion, it housed over 6,000 monks, but today only a few hundred are allowed to reside there. Government restrictions prevent it from regaining its former role as a major center of learning and Buddhist practice. It has been reestablished in southern India, and thousands of monks study there. Tsongkhapa is regarded as the first "Throne Holder of Ganden" (dGa' ldan khri pa); his successors have traditionally been the leaders of the Gelukpa order (and not the Dalai Lamas, as is popularly but mistakenly assumed by many non-Tibetans).

In 1418 he completed one of his most influential works, *Elucidation of the Thought of the Middle Way* (*dBu ma dgongs pa rab gsal*, a commentary on *Entry into the Middle Way*), and in 1419 he passed away at Ganden Monastery. According to Geluk tradition, he adhered to the rules of monastic conduct and avoided engaging in the sexual yogas of highest yoga tantra. He asserted that performance of these techniques with a physical consort is a necessary precondition for attainment of awakening – and as an emanation of Mañjuśrī he could have performed them without violating his vows – but he believed that this would cause confusion among his students and weaken their discipline. Thus he waited until after his death and perfected the sexual yogas while his consciousness inhabited a subtle body (*sgyu lus*; Skt. *māyā-deha*) in the intermediate state (*bar do*; Skt. *antarābhava*). He thus attained full awakening. His remains were cremated and placed in a *stūpa* at Ganden Monastery. During the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), Red Guards opened it and the remains were burned, but the monk who was given the task of transporting them to the fire managed to salvage the skull and some ashes, which were later reinterred.

Following his death his students spread his teachings. New monasteries were founded, and as a result of the Gelukpas' reputation for strict adherence to monastic discipline, high-level scholarship, and advanced tantric practice they gained powerful and wealthy patrons. The order continued to grow, and in 1642 the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Losang Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617–1682), was installed as ruler of Tibet by the Mongol chieftain Güshri Khan (1582–1655). Through the efforts of the Dalai Lama and his regent Sanggye Gyatso (Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, 1653–1705), the Gelukpa order grew rapidly, and soon became the largest Buddhist lineage in Tibet. Tsongkhapa's successors continue to transmit his teachings and interpretations of doctrine, and they are the main sources for the training of young monastics.

NOTES

1   My translation of this work is indebted to that of William Magee, who sent me a draft version.
2   This translation slightly modifies William Magee's draft translation.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

NICHIREN

——— ·◆· ———

Daniel A. Métraux

I will be the pillar of Japan.
I will be the eyes of Japan.
I will be the great ship of Japan.
This is my vow, and I will never forsake it.
<div align="center">(Nichiren 1993: 280)</div>

INTRODUCTION

These fiery words characterize the life of Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–82), one of the most influential, dynamic, and charismatic figures in Japanese history. Nichiren believed that Japan was on the verge of a catastrophic collapse and that only he understood the underlying cause and could provide the cure to save his nation from its impending fate. A revived Japan would then serve as a beacon to lead the whole world out of its misery to a higher, happier, and more peaceful state. Failure to adhere to his doctrines, Nichiren warned, would only serve to plunge the world towards greater misery.

Nichiren was one of the true giants of Japanese history. Contemporary pictures and modern-day statues show a tall and imposing figure. He had a strong and defiant personality; he was headstrong in his beliefs and ready to defy any authority figure who dared stand in his way. At the same time we see a man who passionately wanted to improve life in the world not only for himself, but for all of humanity. Living at a time replete with natural disasters, civil strife, and foreign invasions, Nichiren was certain that he had found both the cause of these mishaps and their cure.

Nichiren's aggressive campaign provoked a strong reaction from Japan's religious and political establishment, which severely persecuted him throughout his life. Nichiren, however, never relented in his drive to save Japan through the creation of an ideal Buddhist realm on earth. His teachings focused on the idea that salvation must concern itself with the actual world rather than another one after death, and he offered a simple method for ordinary people to achieve awakening. Nichiren's doctrines have appealed to both intellectuals and the general public in the centuries since his death.

Nichiren was the most outspoken member of a truly remarkable and dedicated group of Buddhist figures during the Kamakura era (1185–1333) who worked to make Buddhism

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more readily accessible to the general public by simplifying its practices and stressing its message of universal salvation. Nichiren remains today a figure of great importance in the history of Japanese thought and religion because over time his teachings led to the formation of a major distinct school of Buddhism, the only Buddhist school to have its origin in Japan. Nichiren Buddhism has a large following today not only in Japan, but throughout the world.

Nichiren's strong personality and willingness to challenge conventional authority figures made him one of the most controversial yet popular figures in Japanese history. He was also a patriot who envisaged the creation of a peaceful and prosperous buddha land in Japan as well as the rest of the world. He was convinced that humankind will only prosper when the supreme teachings of Buddhism are embraced by the people. After many years of study Nichiren came to the conclusion that the *Lotus Sūtra* is the supreme scripture of the Buddha Śākyamuni and that Buddhist sects that neglected this *sūtra* were leading the nation to ruin.

Nichiren's small Buddhist community persevered after his death and in time grew into a widespread and diverse Buddhist movement. Today there are close to forty religious bodies that claim descent from Nichiren, including prewar extremist nationalists such as Tanaka Chigaku (1861–1939), traditional Buddhist denominations, and such new religious movements as Reiyūkai, Risshō Kōseikai and the Sōka Gakkai. The growth and success of these movements is ample evidence that Nichiren Buddhism remains a major force not only in Japan, but in other countries as well.

Nationalists such as Tanaka Chigaku have portrayed Nichiren as a Japanese nationalist and his Buddhism as a force for nationalism in Japan. They feel that Nichiren regarded Japan as a superior country deeply obligated to lead the rest of the world to a brighter future. However, their conception of Nichiren as some kind of nationalist is wrong. The goal of Nichiren's Buddhism was not to glorify Japan as a nation or the Japanese as a superior people. Nichiren did not regard Japan in terms of what we today call a nation-state and he did not think that Japan should become a Buddhist utopia that would be a beacon to the world. His emphasis was not on improving not just the lives of just the Japanese, but rather of humanity as a whole.

Nichiren believed that all people everywhere have the potential for buddhahood within themselves here and now. His emphasis was on humanity as whole, to move all of humankind from lives of suffering to a bountiful state of buddhahood. Japan was to be the starting point for his desired revival of Buddhism, but his goal was to spread his teachings to the rest of the known world so that all of humankind would benefit.

Nichiren devoted the whole of his life to the propagation of his faith. He was on the one hand a profound scholar who devoted many years, especially as a young man, to the study of Buddhism at leading centers like Mount Hiei and Mount Kōya near Kyoto. He was a prolific writer of Buddhist treatises that expounded his teachings and urged other religious and civil authorities as well as the general public both to join his movement and to abandon other inappropriate forms of Buddhism. His letters to his many followers demonstrate his deep compassion for the welfare of ordinary Japanese. Nichiren was also an activist willing to risk his life to very openly challenge Japan's political and religious hierarchy to adopt his religious views and to drop their "false teachings" that he felt were bringing the world to ruin. He spent many years in forced exile and was once condemned to death. Nichiren fully regarded himself as the one person who could save humankind from ruin by leading it down the path to the deep saving powers of Buddhism.

Nichiren lived during the Kamakura era, one of the most turbulent periods of Japanese history, during which the country was beset by domestic strife, a series of natural disasters

that included massive earthquakes, tsunami, storms, fires and famine, and two full-scale invasions by Mongol armies. Many Japanese at the time believed that they were living in the age of *mappō* (understood as the period of the degeneration of the Dharma) when people moved away from the saving truths of Buddhist scripture and turned to evil and violent ways.[1] Nichiren, who himself subscribed to the doctrine of *mappō* 末法 (Ch. *mofa*), devoted his life to a search for the solution to the ills that had befallen Japan. Following a period of intense study at the Tendai center on Mount Hiei near Kyoto, he developed the idea that Japan was nearing total collapse. He predicted natural disasters and social disorder and later foreign invasions and domestic revolts, arguing that Japan was on the verge of catastrophe because of the failure of Japanese to follow the true teachings of the Buddha Śākyamuni found in the *Lotus Sūtra*.

NICHIREN'S LIFE

Nichiren was born the son of a low-ranking estate overseer involved in fishing in the small coastal village of Kominato on the east coast of Awa Province (present-day Chiba Prefecture near Tokyo) on the sixteenth day of the second month (April 6) of 1222. His home was by the sea in what surely must have been one of the most beautiful areas of Japan. There is very little information about Nichiren's childhood, but his remarkable intelligence must have been evident in his early years. It was not unusual then for impoverished parents to send their brightest children to monasteries for an education. It was probably with this thought in mind that Nichiren's parents sent him to a nearby Tendai sect temple, Seichō-ji.

Nichiren remained at Seichō-ji for four years and studied many different aspects of Buddhism. At the end of this phase of his education he was admitted as the monk Zeshōbō Renchō at age 16. Later he adopted the name "Nichiren" ("Sun Lotus"), which he felt symbolized his critical mission and his major role in its fulfillment, "for *nichi*, 'the sun' represents both the Light of Truth and the Land of the Rising Sun, while *ren* stands for the Lotus."

Nichiren reportedly experienced an intellectual crisis while at Seichō-ji regarding the efficacy of the teachings of Pure Land Buddhism. He prayed at length to Kokūzō, an esoteric bodhisattva enshrined at the temple, and experienced a vision in which Kokūzō bestowed considerable wisdom upon him and encouraged further study of Buddhist doctrines. Describing this experience, he later wrote:

> I, Nichiren, was a resident of [Seichō-ji on] Kiyosumi in Tōjō Village in the Province of Awa. From the time that I was a small child I prayed to Bodhisattva Space Treasury (Kokûzō) asking that I might become the wisest person in all of Japan. The Bodhisattva transformed himself into a venerable priest before my very eyes and bestowed upon me a jewel of wisdom as bright as the morning star. No doubt as a result I was able to gain a general mastery of the principal teachings of the eight older schools of Buddhism in Japan as well as those of the Zen and Nembutsu schools.
>
> (Yampolsky 1996: 129–30)

Nichiren realized that he had to further his education if he was to become a leading Buddhist scholar and teacher. He traveled to the Kansai region and spent the next sixteen years studying at some of the major centers of Buddhist learning including Enryakuji at Mount Hiei, Onjōji, and at Mount Kōya. Nichiren's earlier works demonstrate a deep interest in

esoteric Tendai and Shingon sect teachings as well as the theories of absolute monism derived from Tendai *hongaku* 本覚 (original awakening) and growing faith in the efficacy of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

It is at this time that Nichiren discovered his true purpose in life. It was to reveal the essential teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra* – that is, all living beings can attain buddhahood and the eternity of the Buddha, that the Buddha came into the world to reveal these truths. He read in the *Sūtra*:

> The Buddha … wishes to open the door of Buddha wisdom to all living beings, to allow them to attain purity … They wish to cause living beings to awaken to the Buddha wisdom … to enter the path of Buddha wisdom … The Buddha therefore took a vow to save all living beings and to cause them to enter the Buddha way.
>
> (Watson 1993: 31, 36)

Nichiren returned to his native village and Seichō-ji in 1253. On the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month in the lunar calendar (June 2 in the solar calendar) 1253, he publicly showed his distaste for Pure Land (Jōdo) Buddhism and denounced the teachings of the Jōdo, Zen, Ritsu, and Shingon schools. In what is regarded as the founding of the Nichiren school of Buddhism, he also proclaimed his complete faith in and devotion to the *Lotus Sūtra*. When the local magnate, the retired regent Tōjō Kagenobu, a devotee of Pure Land Buddhism, heard of Nichiren's denunciation of his faith he became embroiled with Nichiren in a dispute over control of Seichō-ji and the regent expelled Nichiren from the region. Nichiren then moved to Kamakura, where he spent the next seven years studying and preparing his famous treatise *Risshō Ankokuron* 立正安国論 (*The Establishment of Righteousness and Security of the Country*). He presented the treatise to the regent Hōjō Tokiyori in 1260, urging the government to cease its patronage of the "evil" sects.

Nichiren's public denunciations of both the government and other popular Buddhist sects earned him the ire of both government and religious authorities. By 1261 he was arrested and exiled to a remote section of the Izu Peninsula. After his release two years later, he resumed his attacks against the Pure Land and Shingon schools and barely escaped an assassination attempt in Komatsubara in Awa Province in 1264. When an emissary from the Mongol Khan arrived in 1268 demanding tribute from Japan to forestall an invasion, Nichiren reminded the government of his 1260 prediction of a Mongol invasion by writing to eleven political and religious leaders of the time, including Hōjō Tokimune (1251–84), the eighth regent of the Kamakura shōgunate, and Hei no Saemon (d. 1293), a leading shōgunal official. Nichiren's continued criticism led to his arrest in 1271 on a charge of high treason and a sentence of death. Nichiren later recounted what happened:

> That night of the twelfth, I was placed under the custody of the Lord of the province of Musashi … and around midnight taken out of Kamakura to be executed … I got down from my horse and called out in a loud voice, "Great Bodhisattva Hachiman, are you truly a god? … why do you not appear at once to fulfill your solemn oath?" … What great joy could there be? … I had no sooner said this when a brilliant orb as bright as the moon burst forth from the direction of Enoshima, shooting across the sky from southeast to northwest … The executioner fell on his face, his eyes blinded. The soldiers were filled with panic.
>
> (WND: 766–77)

This incident convinced Nichiren that he was indeed on a divine mission. Whatever did happen in 1271, we know that the government exiled Nichiren to the distant island of Sado in the Japan Sea for three years. Upon his banishment he wrote:

> I cannot hold back my tears when I think of the great persecution confronting me now, or when I think of the great joy of attaining Buddhahood in the future. Birds and crickets cry, but never shed tears. I, Nichiren, do not cry but my tears flow ceaselessly. I shed my tears not for world affairs but solely for the sake of the Lotus Sūtra. If so, indeed, they must be tears of amrita.
>
> (WND: 386)

Nichiren saw deep symbolic meaning in his narrow escape at the execution ground. He felt that he was one who had risen from the dead, a person reborn in the faith. He wrote:

> In this life, however, as the votary of the Lotus Sūtra, I was exiled and put to death – exiled to Ito and beheaded at Tatsunokuchi. Tatsunokuchi in Sagami Province is the place where Nichiren gave his life. Because he died there for the Lotus Sūtra, how could it be anything less than the Buddha land? … This being so, then every place where Nichiren meets persecution is the Buddha land.
>
> (WND: 196)

Nichiren's time on the island of Sado greatly affected the development of his thought and religious convictions. With endless hours to consider the possible reasons for the many hardships he was experiencing in life due to his self-appointed ministry, in due course he produced two of his more important treatises: *Kaimokushō* 開目抄 (*The Opening of the Eyes*) and *Kanjin no Honzonshō* 観心本尊抄 (*The True Object of Worship*). He evidently composed these works as his final testimonies to his small but growing band of disciples and followers.

During this period Nichiren began to identify his mission with the roles of two bodhisattvas in the *Lotus Sūtra:* Jōfukyō 常不軽 (Skt: Sadāparibhūta), who was persecuted in the distant past for his preaching, and Jōgyō 上行 (Skt: Viśiṣṭacāritra), the leader of a large number of bodhisattvas who were summoned from under the earth to preach the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Nichiren came to the conclusion that *mappō* was the time for Jōgyō and his group of disciples to appear to preach the ultimate truths of the *Sūtra*. Nichiren apparently came to identify himself with Jōgyō. At this time he also began to defend his very straightforward and occasionally harsh tactics of criticizing the "blasphemies" of others who did not follow his teachings. Nichiren contended that this practice of *shakubuku* 折伏 (literally, "break and subdue") was necessary in this dark and desperate age and was far more appropriate than a more tolerant policy of accepting the relative truths of inferior teachings (*shojū* 攝受, "gather and accept") as a basis for religious discussions.

During his exile in Sado, Nichiren began to compose a series of very distinctive *maṇḍala*s written in Chinese characters with arrangements of buddhas, bodhisattvas, and other deities around the *daimoku* 題目 (title) of the *Lotus Sūtra*. He wrote out a good number of these *maṇḍala*s and distributed them to his closest followers as objects of worship and protective amulets. He continued this practice for the rest of his life.

The miseries of Nichiren's exile in the dark and cold wilderness of Sado were alleviated by opportunities he had to debate with local monks and to gain a growing band of new

converts. He also began to receive visits from some of his disciples from the mainland. His pessimism over his own fate declined, and he seemed to gain a fresh optimism regarding the success of his ministry.

This optimism is found in several of his writings of the period, including *Kanjin no Honzon shō*. This treatise explains Nichiren's own interpretation of the concept of *ichinen sanzen* 一念三千 ("three thousand realms in a single moment of life," discussed later in this chapter), the Tendai theory of reality; "the Buddha's Pure Land in this world; the object of worship; and the reinterpretation of *mappō* as the age in which the Buddha's ultimate teaching would appear."

After his release in 1274 Nichiren returned briefly to Kamakura to again warn of an impending Mongol invasion. Shōgunal officials took his warning seriously and invited him to pray together with priests from other Buddhist sects for the salvation of Japan. Nichiren, however, refused to join these other priests and retreated to distant Mount Minobu in Kai Province (present-day Yamanashi Prefecture). That fall the first of two unsuccessful Mongol invasions took place. Nichiren spent his time instructing his disciples and giving sermons. He wrote two of his seminal treatises, *Senji Shō* 撰時抄 ("The Selection of the Time") and *Hōon Shō* 報恩抄 ("On Repaying Debts of Gratitude"), and together with his disciples established a temple, Kuonji, now the head temple of one of the Nichiren sects. Nichiren also wrote a great number of letters, essays and treatises in which he continually urged the nation and the Japanese people to turn to the true teachings of Buddhism. Becoming ill in 1282, he left Minobu destined for a hot spring in present-day Ibaraki Prefecture, but he collapsed *en route* at Ikegami (in the present-day Ota Ward of Tokyo) where he died on the thirteenth day of the tenth month in 1282 (November 21, 1282).

NICHIREN'S LIFE MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

After many years of intensive study at Mount Hiei, Nichiren formulated an apocalyptic view of the possible deterioration of Japan. The many natural disasters that occurred during his later years, along with the two unsuccessful attempts by Mongol forces to invade Japan in 1274 and 1281, seemed to Nichiren to be confirmation of his dire predictions of internal chaos throughout the land.

Joseph Kitagawa (1983: 120), a leading scholar of Japanese Buddhism, writes that Nichiren felt that the transmission of the *Lotus Sūtra* had its basis in a spiritual succession from one charismatic person to the next, even though there might well be a significant space in time between them. Thus, Nichiren regarded himself as the successor of the "Shakyamuni-Chih-I (founder of the Tiantai school in China) – Dengyō (Saichō)" line on the one hand and on the other, as the incarnation of Viśiṣṭacāritra Bodhisattva (Jōgyō, to whom Śākyamuni is said to have entrusted the *Lotus Sūtra*). Nichiren himself wrote:

> I, Nichiren of Awa Province, have doubtless inherited the teachings of the Law from those three teachers, and in this era of the Latter Day I work to uphold the Lotus school and disseminate the Law. Together we should be called the four Teachers of the three countries.

> (WND: 402)

Nichiren's apocalyptic views stem from his interpretation of the old Tendai concept of the Ten Worlds (*jikkai* 十界). According to this view, there are ten states of mind that

simultaneously dominate a person's worldview. All these worlds coexist, but when one world manifests itself more strongly, the other nine worlds are generally latent; the dominant state will overshadow the others and will serve as the basis of somebody's personality. A person who fails to manifest buddhahood and is dominated by "hellish nature" is absorbed with a rage to destroy oneself as well as everyone else. Too many people like this can bring misery to a whole nation. A society dominated by strife will see war, destruction, and a breakdown of order. Nichiren's point is that everyone possesses the Ten Worlds, including buddhahood, meaning that anyone, whether he or she is in the world of "hell" or a higher realm, is potentially capable of attaining buddhahood. Regarding the Ten Worlds, Nichiren wrote:

> When we look from time to time at a person's face, we find him or her sometimes joyful, sometimes enraged and sometimes calm. At times greed appears in the person's face, at times foolishness, and at times perversity. Rage is the world of hell, greed is that of hungry spirits, foolishness is that of animals, perversity is that of asuras, joy is that of heaven, and calmness is that of human beings. These worlds, the six paths, are all present in the physical appearance of the person's face. The remaining four noble worlds are hidden and dormant and do not appear in the face, but if we search carefully, we can tell that they are there. … The fact all things in this world are transient is perfectly clear to us. Is this not because the worlds of the two vehicles are present in the human worlds? Even a heartless villain loves his wife and children. He too has a portion of the bodhisattva world within him. Buddhahood is most difficult to demonstrate. But since you possess the other nine worlds, you should believe that you have Buddhahood as well.

> (WND: 358)

To combat the "breakdown of order," Nichiren warned against the propagation of false doctrines and stated that the ultimate truth of life lies only in the *Lotus Sūtra* where Śākyamuni has revealed that all beings have the potential for buddhahood – that all can be saved. Nichiren felt that the Tendai sect, which had based its teachings on this *sūtra* when the monk Saichō 最澄 (767–822) introduced the sect to Japan from China early in the ninth century CE, had strayed from its teachings and had actually helped to spawn new sects like the Pure Land and "The True World" (Shingon 真言) sects whose practices differed from those of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Nichiren was a dedicated scholar who devoted years to the study of Buddhist scripture and doctrine. His personal research, however, always brought him the one central conclusion that faith in the *Sūtra* is all one needs for salvation. Nichiren was also a man of action who dedicated his life to the propagation of his faith. He stressed that followers should also clearly demonstrate their faith by aggressive refutation of other faiths (*shakubuku*). He stressed the importance not only of saving oneself through faith in the teachings of Śākyamuni in the *Sūtra*, but also of active propagation of the faith to others:

> [If] even one with deep faith does not rebuke the enemies of the *Lotus Sūtra*, no matter what great good he may produce, even if he recites and copies the *Lotus Sūtra* a thousand or ten thousand times, or perfects the way of contemplating the three thousand realms in one-thought moment, if he fails to rebuke the enemies of the *Lotus Sūtra*, then it will be impossible for him to realize enlightenment. To illustrate, even if one has served the court for ten or twenty years, if, knowing of the ruler's enemies, he fails to

report them or to oppose them himself, then the merit of his service will all be lost and he will instead be guilty of a crime. You must understand that the people of today are slanderers of the Dharma.

(quoted in Endō 1999: 250)

Nichiren accepted the two major points made in the Sūtra. The first is that the Buddha was no mere mortal, but a manifestation of an eternal buddha. Śākyamuni is one of an endless series of buddhas who are born into the world, who go through the process of becoming awakened to demonstrate the experience to humankind and who, upon death, enter a state of nirvana from which there is no rebirth. The second concept is that of buddha-nature, or buddhahood, which is universal and all-pervading and that exists in all beings. Thus, buddha-nature exists in all of us all of the time and forms the very core of our being; redemption for humankind is possible even during the darkest days of *mappō*.

Having concluded that the *Lotus Sūtra* offers humankind the only real chance for salvation during *mappō*, Nichiren wrote that: "the *Lotus* represents the true teaching of the Buddha. Buddha himself realized that … with the coming of *mappō*, this *sūtra* must be spread to the rest of the world to save humanity" (quoted in Rodd 1980: 34–35). Nichiren concluded that the *Sūtra* was expounded for the sake of sinners living at the start of this degenerate age and that he, Nichiren, must lead the crusade to save humanity by introducing them to the *Sūtra*. Nichiren was convinced that if all of mankind joined him in reverence to the *Lotus Sūtra*, the natural and social disasters facing the Japanese nation and the hardships encountered by many individual Japanese would disappear. He summed up his self-proclaimed mission as follows:

I have appeared in Japan in this time of emergency by the order of the Buddha. I dare say that I am not fortunate. However, the order of the King of the Law is categorical. Therefore, according to the *Lotus Sūtra*, I raise the army of the true teaching against the forces of provisional teachings, wear the armor of patience, take the sword of the wonderful Law, bend the bow of the Revelation of the Truth, fix the arrow of honesty, ride the white bullock-cart of equality, break the gate of provisional teachings, and hurl criticism at the followers of the Nembutsu, Shingon, Zen, Ritsu and other sects. Some of them run away or withdraw, while others are captured and become my disciples. I will repeat the offensive. I will march on, although they are many and my friends are few.

(quoted in Hoshino Eizen and Senchu Murano 1968: 8)

The goal of Nichiren's Buddhism, therefore, was to move as many people as possible from the misery of a hellish mind to the peaceful, joyful, and understanding state of buddhahood. Buddhahood is not something that one attains at death; one can find it here and now by showing one's faith in the teachings of the *Sūtra* and propagating these findings to others. According to Nichiren, Śākyamuni promises to bring awakening and true happiness to all those who have profound faith in his teachings and invoke any part of the *Sūtra* as a sign of their faith. Nichiren insisted that with the coming of the dawn of *mappō*, the *Sūtra* must be spread to the rest of the world to save humanity.

Nichiren has a positive and optimistic view regarding the age of *mappō*. This is because the great Mystic Law, which is capable of saving all living beings, is revealed in *mappō*. Nichiren believed that in *mappō* the Buddha Śākyamuni's teachings, including the *Lotus*

Sūtra, as expounded by all the Buddhist teachers before him in the Former and Middle Days of the Law, had lost power and become obsolete, as he says in his writings such as *Selection of the Time*, "There is no doubt that our present age corresponds to the fifth five-hundred-year period (*mappō*) described in the *Great Collection Sūtra*, when the pure Law (Śākyamuni's teachings) will become obscured and lost" (WND: 410). Nichiren, however, writes immediately after that sentence: "But after the pure Law is obscured and lost, the great pure Law of *Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō*, the heart and core of the *Lotus Sūtra*, will surely spread and be widely declared throughout the land of Jambudvīpa" (WND: 410).

Nichiren believed that while the promise of the Buddha, the salvation of all who honor the teachings of the *Sūtra*, can be readily understood, the actual teachings of the *Sūtra*, represented by Tiantai's doctrine of the three thousand realms in a single moment of life, are so complicated that they are well beyond the capacity of any person to comprehend. So he presented an essential and simple way by which even the most illiterate person may demonstrate his faith and embody its glory. That is to utter the title (*daimoku*) of the *Lotus*, *Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō* 南無妙法蓮華経 ("Praise to the Lotus Sūtra of the True Dharma"). Nichiren wrote in his *Kanjin no Honzonshō*:

> Showing profound compassion for those unable to comprehend the gem of the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment of life, the Buddha wrapped it within the five characters [of *Myōhō-renge-kyō*], with which he then adorned the necks of the ignorant people of the latter age.

> (WND: 376)

Nichiren believed that people who chant the *daimoku* and behave in accordance with the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra* will improve both their individual karma and that of society, the nation, and eventually all of humanity.

Nichiren lived in an era of intense reform for Japanese Buddhists. The aristocratic and highly sophisticated esoteric Buddhism of the Heian period (794–1185) had been in decline since around the year 1000 and was in the process of being replaced by simpler versions of Buddhism that were more accessible to ordinary people. The most popular strain was the Pure Land (Jōdo Shū 浄土宗) sect that stressed dependence on the Buddha Amida for eternal salvation after death (see the article by Jones in this volume). Any person, however sinful, can be saved if he calls out the Buddha's name (*nembutsu*). Every individual, however, is totally dependent on Amida's saving grace. Nichiren Buddhism is somewhat different. The belief is that all people have the potential for buddhahood within themselves here and now in this lifetime.[2] A realm of true happiness is none other than the world in which we live today. The Buddhist realm is something we can create within the confines of modern society.

The teachings developed by Nichiren are based on four key points. First, the *Lotus Sūtra* is the highest and only valid scripture for the age of *mappō* because it offers salvation to all of humankind. One need only show complete faith in its creed to be saved. Second, Nichiren believed in an eternal, omnipresent, and omnipotent Buddha who can save all of mankind. Third, this Buddha is imminent in every aspect of reality. All humans can gain salvation because they possess buddha nature. Fourth, the means by which one can attain salvation is a path consisting of the "Three Great Secret Laws" (*San Dai Hihō* 三大秘法): the *honzon* or "object of worship," the nature of which has been the subject of much debate but which is most commonly a *maṇḍala* in Chinese characters showing buddhas, bodhisattvas, and

other deities arranged around the *daimoku*; the *kaidan* or "ordination platform" (Lamont 1983, vol. 6: 376).

   Nichiren directed his strongest criticism toward high-ranking government officials and the leaders of other Buddhist sects. He felt that because government plays a leading role in society, Japan's rulers had an obligation to suppress the Pure Land sect and promote his teachings if Japan were to have any hope of surviving the current degenerate age. Nichiren composed his 1260 treatise, *Risshō Ankoku Ron* 立正安国論 ("On Securing the Peace of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism"), to try to persuade shōgunal officials in Kamakura to heed his warnings.

> During recent years cosmic cataclysms, natural disasters, famines, and epidemics have filled the world. Oxen and horses collapse at the crossroads. Already more than half the population has died; no one is free of affliction … (People invoke Amida's name and others pray to a variety of deities). But while we rack our minds and bodies, famine and plague grow more menacing. Everywhere we see beggars; our eyes cannot escape the sight of death. … Why then is the world crumbling so fast and the Buddha Law decaying …?
>
> (quoted in Rodd 1980: 59–60)

Nichiren responds to this query by noting that the people have forgotten the Buddha's teachings:

> [While searching for a solution to the ills that have befallen Japan] I have pondered the matter carefully with what limited resources I possess, and have looked a little at the scriptures for an answer. The people today all turn their backs upon what is right; to a person, they give their allegiance to evil. This is the reason that the benevolent deities have abandoned the nation and departed together, that the sages leave and do not return. And in their stead devils and demons come and disasters and calamities occur.
>
> (WND: 7)

Nichiren continued:

> (When) the saints will abandon the country … the seven calamities will occur … there will be: pestilence among the people, foreign invasion, civil revolt, stars wandering from their heavenly positions, eclipses of the sun and moon, typhoons out of season, prolonged drought.
>
> (Rodd 1980: 62)

In *Risshō Ankokuron* Nichiren levels his harshest attacks not against political leaders, but against other religious sects, especially the followers of Pure Land.[3] He concludes that these practitioners of lesser religions have led the people and government away from the truth of the *Lotus Sūtra*. His solution is easy: stop giving alms to these heretics and instead give assistance to the monks and nuns of the true faith. Clearing the land of these "bandits" will ensure the salvation of the nation. The following section looks at Nichiren's conception of nation and the creation of an ideal buddha land in this world.

NICHIREN'S AFFIRMATION OF A BUDDHA LAND IN THE WORLD OF *MAPPŌ*

Nichiren conceived of salvation as something that can occur here and now, in the present world, which he identified with the Pure Land of the Buddha. He came to this conclusion by combining two very different concepts. Like many of his contemporaries living in the difficult days of the Kamakura era, Nichiren believed that his own time had to be that of the Final Dharma age, a dark, sad, and degenerate time when humans are burdened by "karmic hindrances and liberation is difficult to achieve" (Habito and Stone 1999: 225–26). Nichiren also adopted the traditional Tendai concept of the "three thousand realms in one thought-moment," which holds that the buddha realm is inherent at each moment in the minds of ordinary humans. While *mappō* thought represents a very negative view of the human condition, *ichinen sanzen* is something that affirms it. The harmonizing of these two contrasting concepts lies at the heart of Nichiren's mission (Endō 1999: 240). "Striving to realize the Buddha land in the present world amounted to a vow that Nichiren maintained throughout his life" (Endō 1999: 240).

Ichinen Sanzen is one of the cardinal elements of Nichiren's teachings. As originally stated by Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597), founder of China's Tiantai sect (Tendai in Japan), it means that the human mind at any one moment incorporates the universe in its 3,000 aspects. The figure 3,000 is arrived at in the following way: Nichiren explained the psychological state of human beings through the Tendai concept of the ten worlds, according to which there are at least ten states of mind always present in the personality of every human. Everyone is dominated by one of these psychological states, which range from pure rage (hell) to sheer joy (buddhahood). Each person's personality is dominated by one of these psychological worlds at any given or existential point in time. Many people are dominated by the angry worlds of hate and greed, which can make for a brutish life. The human condition will only improve when the buddha nature (ultimate good) prevails throughout humanity. Since each state of mind contains all ten conditions, the total number of states of mind is in fact 100.

Each of these 100 worlds possesses what is known as 10 factors (*ju nyoze* 十如是). The ten factors of life are principles for clarifying one's life entity and function and consist of: appearance [the manifest world]; nature [spirit, mind, wisdom]; entity [life]; power [inherent strength]; influence [when power releases energy]; internal cause; relation; latent effect; manifest effect; and the consistency found through the nine aspects of life. The ten factors when multiplied with the 100 worlds bring us to one thousand. Finally each being is different from all others as expressed through the three realms of existence, which include the individual, society, and the environment. This brings us to the three thousand worlds. Nichiren writes:

> Volume five of Great Concentration and Insight states: 'Life at each moment is endowed with the Ten Worlds. At the same time, each of the Ten Worlds is endowed with all Ten Worlds, so that an entity of life actually possesses one hundred worlds. Each of these worlds in turn possesses thirty realms, which means that in the one hundred worlds there are three thousand realms. The three thousand realms of existence are all possessed by life in a single moment. If there is no life, that is the end of the matter. But if there is the slightest bit of life, it contains all the three thousand realms. … This is what we mean when we speak of the "region of the unfathomable".'
>
> <div align="right">(WND: 354)</div>

The key point here is Nichiren's belief that since the ten worlds include buddha nature, all phenomena – "body and mind, self and environment, sentient and insentient, cause and effect – are integrated in the life moment of the common mortal" (WND: 177). This means that the human realm includes the buddha realm and that the ideal state of Buddhism, a world inhabited by peaceful and compassionate people inspired by Buddhist principles, is entirely possible, even in this decadent world of *mappō*. Nichiren confirms this connection between the mundane world and the buddha realm when he writes that:

> Now in the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra*, people are certainly self-empowered, and yet they are not self-empowered. This is because one's own self, or life, at the same time possesses the nature of all living beings in the Ten Worlds. Therefore this self has from the beginning been in possession of one's own realm of Buddhahood possessed by all other living beings. Therefore when one attains Buddhahood one does not take on some new or "other" Buddha identity. Again, in the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra*, people are certainly other-powered, and yet they are not other-empowered. The buddhas, who are considered separate from us, are actually contained within our own selves, or the lives of us, ordinary people. Those buddhas manifest the realms of Buddhahood of all living beings in the same manner as we do.
>
> (WND vol. 2: 62)

Since there is a deep interconnection between the transcendent world of the Buddha and the mundane world inhabited by humankind, the highest teachings of the Buddha must become the framework by which each person – and, by extension, the nation as a whole – should guide one's life. Sato Hiroo (1999: 320) writes:

> Nichiren, not satisfied with relegating salvation to the inner life of the individual, taught that it was imperative to engage oneself in active efforts to objectively transform the land toward the realization of an ideal society wherein people would be able to attain happiness. He emphasized the task of constructing the Buddha land in this world in his teaching …
>
> In the chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* entitled "Springing Up out of the Earth," there is a scene where numerous Bodhisattvas appear and receive the mission to propagate the Dharma in this evil world in the time after the Buddha's entry into nirvana. Nichiren presents the religious dimension of his own actions and those of his followers with this scene from the *Lotus Sūtra* in mind, identifying himself and his followers with the bodhisattvas described therein. If he and his followers are in effect these bodhisattvas depicted in the *Lotus Sūtra*, it would follow that their actions related to the propagation of the *Lotus Sūtra*, toward the realization of the Buddha land in this earthly realm, are no less than sacred acts that bring to fulfillment the Buddha's own predictions (as given in the *Lotus Sūtra*). For Nichiren and his followers, theirs was a sacred mission for which they were called to dedicate and offer their lives.

Nichiren was emphatic in his position concerning the proper relationship between religion and the state. He based his whole adult life on the thesis that Japan is inherently the land of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Japan suffered, he declared over and over, because many Japanese disparaged the *sūtra* and because the shōgunal government would not adopt its teachings. The result was that Japan was beset by natural calamities and social ills. He relentlessly attacked other sects, especially Pure Land and Zen, and remonstrated against the government.

Nichiren's approach has a highly eschatological view of history. From the ashes of *mappō* will come a much improved world. He wrote that "If we hurry to stop alms to heretics and give alms instead to monks and nuns of the true faith, if we cleanse the kingdom of these bandits," society will be transformed into a Buddhist utopia (Rodd 1980: 74). At the end of *Risshō Ankoku Ron*, Nichiren gives his readers an idea of what his Buddhist paradise would be like. It will be a realm that does not suffer the seven calamities that he predicted earlier in this work, and it will be watched over by guardian deities. The country will be safe and peaceful, there will be no natural disasters, crops will be bountiful, and all the people will live together in peace and harmony. He continues:

> The time will come when all people will abandon the various kinds of vehicles and take up the single vehicle of Buddhahood, and the Mystic Law alone will flourish throughout the land. When the people all chant *Nam-myōhō-renge-kyō*, the wind will no longer buffet the branches, and the rain will no longer break the clods of soil. The world will become as it was in the ages of Fu Hsi and Shen Nung. In their present existence the people will be freed from misfortune and disasters and learn the art of living long. Realize that the time will come when the truth will be revealed that both person and the Law are unaging and eternal.
>
> (WND: 392)

Nichiren's eschatological view of world history thus has a bright future. In *Kaimokushō* Nichiren states that at the darkest and most desperate time during *mappō,* followers of the *Lotus Sūtra* will preach the ultimate truth of the *Sūtra*. Gradually people will come to see the value of the *Sūtra* and will venerate it with full faith. Thus, the *Sūtra* and the *daimoku*, the symbol of the entire strength and truth of the *Sūtra* itself, will become the object of worship. Those chanting the *daimoku* will gradually attain better karma and enter a higher realm of the ten worlds. When all humankind abandons other false or lesser teachings and practices chanting, everyone will in time achieve buddhahood in this lifetime.

Nichiren's concern with the "peace of the nation" was a critical part of his religious vision. His conception of the term "nation" focused not so much on the political power structure (emperor and shōgun) as on the land and people who lived there. The role of the nation's leaders was to serve as the instruments for the establishment of peace in the land and among the people. "For Nichiren the highest value is the Transcendent Power who is none other than Śākyamuni Buddha, before whom all human beings stand on an equal plane." Failure on the part of political leaders to achieve this goal would be loss of power and possible punishment in hell (Sato 1999: 308).

The Transcendent Power in the universe is the eternal Buddha and the Buddhist Dharma that is expounded in the *Sūtra*. There is no earthly authority that is superior to this Transcendent Power, and every human, including the emperor of Japan himself,

> stands on an equal plane vis-à-vis this Buddha … In this framework, it is understood that even the Tennō [Emperor], upon becoming an enemy of Śākyamuni, will fall into hell, and any person, even one of low social status, having faith, will attain enlightenment.
>
> (Sato 1999: 318)

Transformation of the nation into the peaceful buddha land envisioned by Nichiren required converting not only the emperor and shōgun to the true Buddhism, but just as importantly

the ordinary citizen as well. It was imperative that his followers should embark on a full-scale drive to save the nation. If there was nobody alive to propagate the true teachings of Śākyamuni, all good in the world would sink away and the world would fall into complete ruin.

Nichiren envisioned Japan as the starting point for world salvation. He strove to energize his movement in his country, and once he and his disciples were successful there they would then make pilgrimages to the outside world, which to Nichiren consisted of India, China, and Korea.

NICHIREN'S LEGACY

Nichiren is one of the most fascinating and controversial figures in Japanese history. Many later thinkers have reinterpreted his ideas to suit their own agendas. For example, several prewar Japanese militarists regarded Nichiren as an ultranationalist very deeply devoted both to the emperor and to the glory of Japan. This development, which was linked to his deep concern for the welfare of the nation, fails to recognize that his teachings also contain a strong criticism of religious and political authorities. The reality, however, is that Nichiren was fixated on what he regarded as the transcendent truths of the *Lotus Sūtra*, with which the country's political order, including the emperor and shōgun, were expected to concern themselves. Furthermore, while he regarded Japan to be the country where his Buddhist revival would begin, ultimately he saw the necessity of spreading his teachings beyond Japan to China, India, and the rest of the world. His ultimate mission was the salvation of the entirety of humankind, not just the people of Japan. Arnold Toynbee (1972: xi) wrote: "Nichiren, … loved his country, but his horizon and concern were not bounded by Japan's coast. Nichiren held that Buddhism, as he conceived it, was a means of salvation for his fellow human beings everywhere."

Shortly before his death, Nichiren designated six of his major followers to carry on his teachings. Known as the *Roku Rōsō* 六老僧 (Six Senior Priests), they were: Nichiji 日持 (1250–?), Nitchō 日頂 (1252–1317), Nikō 日向 (1253–1314), Nikkō 日興 (1246–1333), Nichirō 日朗 (1245–1320) and Nisshō 日昭 (1221?–1323). These disciples spread across the eastern provinces of Japan tending to local congregations and not coordinating their activities with each other. Further splintering of the Nichiren sects and subsects occurred over the next several centuries over different interpretations of Nichiren's doctrines. As a result, a great many groups that exist within the Nichiren school of Buddhism today.

By the latter part of the medieval period, Nichiren Buddhism had found a large number of adherents, including a loyal following among lower-level samurai, merchants in Kyoto and elsewhere, and a scattering of intellectuals. The militant faith and clear simple teachings and practices of Nichiren Buddhism continued to attract support among samurai as well as many common people up through the modern period. The greatest growth, however, came in the twentieth century with the proliferation of new religious movements. Several of these organizations claiming Buddhist origins and associations with Nichiren Buddhism have attracted millions of followers not only in Japan but also throughout the world.

ABBREVIATIONS

WND = Nichiren 1993 (see below).

NOTES

1 *Mappō* or Latter Day of the Dharma is the

> last of three periods following Śākyamuni Buddha's death when Buddhism falls into confusion and Śākyamuni's teachings lose the power to lead people to enlightenment … The *Daishitsu* Sūtra predicts that this … will be an "age of conflict," when monks will disregard the precepts and feud constantly among themselves, heretical views will prevail, and Śākyamuni's Buddhism will perish.

The first two eras are *shōbō* (true law), which began immediately after the Buddha's death and lasted a thousand years, and *zōbō* (imitative law) which lasted during the second millennium following the Buddha's death. During *shobo* the world was a contented and peaceful place. The peace was maintained during *zōbō*, but the world became an ugly chaotic realm during *mappō*. Asian Buddhist tradition holds that Śākyamuni died in 949 BCE. Calculating from this date, Japanese Buddhist scholars in the Kamakura period believed that *mappō* had begun in 1052 CE. They attributed the chaos to this concept. Source: Nichiren Shoshu International Center (1983: 244).

2 "In this lifetime:" This view is chiefly based on one of the most important concepts of the *Lotus Sūtra*, namely, *sōkushin-jōbutsu* (attaining Buddhahood in one's present form). This principle is illustrated by the example of the dragon king's daughter in the "Devadatta" (twelfth) chapter, who, by practicing the *Lotus Sūtra*, attains buddhahood in a single moment without changing her dragon form. Another concept *isshō-jōbutsu* (attaining buddhahood in this lifetime) is almost the same principle. Nichiren frequently refers to this doctrine in his writings.

3 Nichiren wrote: "Those who practice invocation to Amitabba are due to suffer continuous punishment in Hell; the Zen sect is the devil; the Shingon sect is the ruiner of the country; the Ritsu sect is the enemy of the country." Quoted in Kitagawa 1983: 120.

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CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

THICH NHAT HANH

— •◆• —

John Powers

INTRODUCTION

Thich Nhat Hanh (Viet. Thích Nhất Hạnh) is one of the most prominent Buddhist leaders in the world today. A prolific author who has published more than 100 books, including *The Miracle of Mindfulness*, *Anger*, and *Peace Is Every Step*, he has had a profound impact on both theory and practice for many contemporary Buddhists, particularly with regard to his efforts to integrate mindfulness training into daily life as a mechanism for promoting peace. He is widely credited with coining the term "Engaged Buddhism" as a description of how Buddhists should manifest their beliefs in concrete activities in the world aimed at improving the lives of disadvantaged people, transforming societies, and promoting peace.[1] This attitude should influence all aspects of life, from interactions with family and friends to how one conducts oneself at work, and in broader areas of public policy:

> Every day we do things, we are things that have to do with peace. If we are aware of our life, our way of consuming, our way of looking at things, we will know how to make peace right in the moment, we are alive, in the present moment.
>
> (Nhat Hanh 1987: 69)

Although he is widely credited with originating the term "engaged Buddhism," he attributes the idea to the Vietnamese king Trần Nhân Tông (陳仁宗, 1258–1308), who abdicated the throne, became a Buddhist monk, and founded the Bamboo Forest (Trúc Lâm) tradition.

EARLY LIFE

Thich Nhat Hanh's birth name was Nguyễn Xuân Bảo. He was born in Thừa Thiên Huế in central Vietnam in 1926 and received novice ordination at the age of sixteen. He began his Buddhist study at Từ Hiếu Temple, located near Huế. His main teacher was Thanh Quý Chân Thật, a Zen (Viet. Thiền; Ch. 禪 Chan) master of the fortieth generation of the Lâm Tế (Ch. Linji 臨濟; Jpn. Rinzai) order and the eighth generation of the Liễu Quán school, who taught him Buddhist doctrine and meditation practice. Thich Nhat Hanh's training included mindfulness meditation and *kōan* (Ch. *gongan* 公案 Viet. *công án*) practice.

Students were required to engage in manual labor, and the monastery followed the Zen principle of "no work, no food." Thich Nhat Hanh reports that he spent hours every day in grueling activities such as polishing rice and carrying buckets of water until his shoulders were red and swollen. Following full monastic ordination in 1949, he studied at the Báo Quốc Buddhist Academy in central Vietnam.

Thích 釋 is the standard term for Vietnamese Buddhist monks, a shortened form of Thích Ca or Thích Già 釋迦 (pronounced Shijia in Chinese), referring to the Buddha's clan, the Śākya. Thich Nhat Hanh has a number of titles given to him by Buddhist masters, including the "Dharma name" Phùng Xuân. He is most commonly known by the title Nhất 一 Hạnh 行, which he translates as "One Action." He is referred to as "Thay" (Viet. Thầy), "Teacher," by his students and associates.

Thich Nhat Hanh became dissatisfied with the curriculum at the Buddhist Academy, which only taught the traditional subjects of Buddhist monasticism. He came to believe that monks in the modern world must become conversant with science, world literature, philosophy, and foreign languages. The administrators who ran the institution were not willing to consider curricular reform, and so Thich Nhat Hanh and five other students withdrew and moved to a temple in Saigon, and he subsequently studied Western science and philosophy at Saigon University.

In 1956 he became chief editor of *Vietnamese Buddhism* (*Phật giáo Việt Nam*), a publication of the Unified Vietnam Buddhist Association (Giáo Hội Phật Giáo Việt Nam Thống Nhất). As part of his efforts to spread the message of Buddhism in his country, in 1964 he founded Lá Bối Press and the Vạn Hạnh Buddhist University. He taught Buddhist psychology and perfection of wisdom (*prajñā-pāramitā*) philosophy. One of his most important initiatives was the creation of the School of Youth for Social Service (SYSS), which trained young volunteers who went to rural areas of Vietnam to create schools and clinics and worked to rebuild infrastructure in villages that had been ravaged by war. Its charter declared that it was formed in order to practice Buddhism in the world by "studying, experimenting with, and applying Buddhism in modern life, with a special emphasis on the bodhisattva ideal." It had "four spirits": (1) the spirit of nonattachment to views; (2) the spirit of direct experimentation on the nature of dependent arising through meditation; (3) the spirit of appropriateness; and (4) the spirit of skillful means.[2]

In 1960 he traveled to the United States to study comparative religion at Columbia University, and from 1961 to 1963 taught at Columbia and Princeton University. In 1963 he returned to Vietnam to work for peace. In February 1964 he established the Order of Interbeing (Tiếp Hiện 接現). It included the groups that composed the traditional Buddhist *saṃgha*: monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. The early members were a small group of people who engaged in social work and who were dedicated to putting Buddhist ideals into practice.

His social activism was motivated by the escalation of the Vietnam War and the consequent devastation of his country and massive loss of life. He hoped that small groups of dedicated peace workers would have a positive impact at the local level and could put pressure on leaders of opposing factions to reconcile conflicts. He left Vietnam in 1966 hoping to raise international awareness of the horrors of war, but because he refused to choose sides in the conflict between North and South Vietnam, both regarded him as an enemy. He was not allowed to return until 2005.

During the Vietnam War, he became a prominent activist and attempted to apply Buddhist principles to promote reconciliation between warring factions, and he later

expanded his efforts in a global context. He gained international recognition following his nomination by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929–1968) for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. In an open letter to the Nobel Prize Committee, Dr. King wrote: "This gentle Buddhist monk from Vietnam is a scholar of immense intellectual capacity. His ideas for peace, if applied, would build a monument to ecumenism, to world brotherhood, to humanity" (1967 unpublished).

Thich Nhat Hanh's work was not so well received in his native country, however. Like many Buddhists, he feared a Communist takeover because of their ideological antipathy toward religion. He wrote articles in a daily newspaper in which he encouraged Buddhists to form a united front against the Communists, and he also convened meetings designed to develop a modern Buddhism. This brought him into conflict with the conservative Buddhist monastic establishment and the government. The journal he edited was cancelled, and the experimental community he founded at Phương Bối, located in a forest near Saigon, was attacked by government forces. The residents were forcibly relocated to a government-run hamlet.

Even though the center was abolished, it continued to serve as a symbol for him of a community based on shared Buddhist ideals and committed to nonviolent social change. He later wrote: "We can never really lose Phuong Boi. It is a sacred reality in our hearts" (Nhat Hanh 1999: 69). This sense of continuity was the basis for one of his most famous meditations, which involves cultivating a sense of being at home wherever one is: "I have arrived. I am home." Any place can become the Pure Land through transforming one's attitudes and engaging in actions that promote peace. He describes this attitude:

> I have arrived in the Pure Land, a real home where I can touch the paradise of my childhood and all the wonders of life. I am no longer concerned with being and nonbeing, coming and going, being born or dying. In my true home I have no fear, no anxiety. I have peace and liberation. My true home is in the here and now.
>
> (Nhat Hanh 2003: 19)

He continued to write and lecture, and during one of his talks he met a young biology student named Cao Ngọc Phượng (1938–), whom he later gave the Dharma name Sister Chân Không. She became one of his core associates and still works with him today.

THE VIETNAM WAR

Thich Nhat Hanh's vision of a modern and engaged Buddhism that responds in concrete ways to the needs of society and works for the betterment of both humans and other beings was forged in the turmoil of the Vietnam War. Vietnam has a long history of invasion and colonization, and this has profoundly shaped developments in the country. From 111 BCE to 938 CE it was part of the Chinese empire, but following a military victory in the Battle of Bạch Đằng River Vietnam became an independent state. Successive dynasties expanded its territory in Southeast Asia, but it again became a colony when France conquered the Indochina Peninsula in the mid-nineteenth century. France controlled the region from 1862 until the 1940s. The French attempted to impose their culture and religion, and French Catholicism was widely propagated. There were a number of indigenous resistance movements, including the Yên Bái mutiny of the Việt Nam Quốc Dân Đảng in 1930.

French control was interrupted during World War II when Japan invaded and occupied Vietnam in 1941. Japan used Vietnam as a source of natural resources and labor, leading to the Vietnamese Famine of 1945, during which up to 2 million people died. This prompted another resistance movement led by the communist Việt Minh. Under the leadership of Hồ Chí Minh (1890–1969), they fought for independence from both France and Japan. Following Japan's defeat and surrender and the fall of its puppet "Empire of Vietnam" in August 1945, the Việt Minh occupied Saigon and established a provisional government. France responded by attempting to reestablish colonial rule, which sparked the First Indochina War (1946–1954). Vietnamese forces prevailed in the 1954 Battle of Điện Biên Phủ, following which Hồ Chí Minh negotiated a ceasefire at the Geneva Conference. French Indochina was abolished through the Geneva Accords of 1954, but seeds of future conflict were sown by a division of the country into a communist-led North Vietnam and a Western-oriented South Vietnam divided at the 17th Parallel and separated by a Demilitarized Zone.

The Geneva Accords stipulated that the country would be reunited after general elections in 1956, but in 1955 Ngô Đình Diệm (1901–1963), Prime Minister of the State of Vietnam, proclaimed himself president of the Republic of Vietnam, which included both north and south. This prompted the communist Việt Cộng to begin a guerilla war against the Diệm regime. The communist government of the north began a program of land reform in which property was confiscated from wealthy landowners and between 50,000 and 172,000 people were executed as part of a plan to restructure the society. The Soviet Union signed treaties with North Vietnam in 1960 and 1962 and pledged military support. In the south, Diệm sought to crush opposition by imprisoning or executing tens of thousands of real and suspected enemies.

Diệm, an avowed Roman Catholic, was overtly hostile toward Buddhism and in 1963 he banned the display of Buddhist flags on the anniversary of the Buddha's birth. Buddhists protesting the decree were attacked by government troops, and some were killed. On June 11, the Buddhist monk Thích Quảng Đức (born 1897) burned himself alive at a busy intersection in Saigon in public as a protest. This was the first instance of self-immolation in Vietnam, and it drew attention from around the world. Other monks followed his example. In a letter to Dr. King, Thich Nhat Hanh explained the motivation behind his act:

> The press spoke then of suicide, but in the essence, it is not. It is not even a protest. What the monks said in the letters they wrote before burning themselves aimed only at alarming, at moving the hearts of the oppressors, and at calling the attention of the world to the suffering endured then by the Vietnamese.
>
> (Nhat Hanh 1967: 106)

In December 1963, Thich Nhat Hanh submitted a three-point proposal to the executive council of the Unified Buddhist Church (UBC) that called for: (1) a cessation of hostilities by both sides; (2) establishment of a Buddhist institute that would train leaders to develop tolerance; and (3) a center to educate workers in nonviolent social change. The council accepted the proposal for the institute but rejected his other ideas. The Vạn Hạnh Buddhist University was founded in 1964, but in 1966 the UBC withdrew its support because it feared that the social welfare activities of the SYSS put them in league with the Communists. By this time, however, the organization was able to function on its own, and in February of 1966 Thich Nhat Hanh ordained six members as the foundation of a new religious movement that he named "Order of Interbeing."

In 1966 he visited nineteen countries on a speaking tour sponsored by the Fellowship for Reconciliation. In the US he met with religious and political leaders, including Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara (1916–2009) and Trappist monk Thomas Merton (1915–1968). He also addressed the British House of Commons and the Canadian and Swedish parliaments and met Pope Paul VI (1897–1978) and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey (1904–1988). In Washington D.C. on June 1, 1966, he issued a "Five Point Proposal to End the War," which urged the United States to:

> State clearly that it respects the right of Vietnamese to choose the kind of government they want;
> Cease all bombing, North and South;
> Declare a unilateral cease-fire;
> Set a date for total withdrawal of all US troops from Viet Nam (in terms of months) and begin the withdrawal immediately;
> Help rebuild Viet Nam, all aid being completely free of ideological and political strings.
> (quoted in Wirmark 1975: 32)

Despite his success in meeting international leaders and influencing world opinion, one result of his tour was exile. He was privately counseled by Buddhist leaders not to return to Vietnam because he would likely either be imprisoned or assassinated. He had survived one assassination attempt before the tour began, and the Vietnamese government made it clear that he would not be allowed back. Requests for visas for him and his colleagues were ignored.

The brutality of the Diệm regime led to a Buddhist uprising and mass demonstrations beginning in 1963. Diệm responded with a violent crackdown, which caused the United States to distance itself from him and his policies. He was overthrown and assassinated in 1963. In 1964 the US used the Tonkin Gulf incident as a pretext to intervene to prop up the unpopular regime in the South, and military forces began ground combat operations in 1965. A number of military figures attempted to seize power, but all failed until Air Marshal Nguyễn Cao Kỳ (1930–2011) and General Nguyễn Văn Thiệu (1923–2001) formed a government in 1965. Thiệu seized and retained power through fraudulent elections in 1967 and 1971, but his regime was weakened by an increasingly aggressive communist insurgency.

At the peak of the hostilities that followed, more than 500,000 US troops were stationed in Vietnam and surrounding countries. China and the Soviet Union intervened on the side of North Vietnam. During the Tet Offensive of 1968, troops from the North invaded. They were militarily defeated, but the devastation and loss of life created a backlash in the United States and fuelled a widespread antiwar movement. By the early 1970s America ended ground operations, and continuing attempts to support the South Vietnamese regime failed. On January 27, 1973, the Paris Peace Accords were signed, and all American troops were withdrawn by March 1973. In 1974 the North launched a full-scale offensive, and Saigon fell on April 30, 1975. On July 2, 1976 the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was inaugurated. The war devastated the country and decimated the population; estimates of the death toll range from 800,000 to 3.1 million.

Reunification led to even more problems for the people of Vietnam. Lê Duẩn (1907–1986) initiated a program of forced collectivization of farms and factories that led to triple-digit inflation and economic chaos. More than 1 million people judged to have

counterrevolutionary ideologies were sent to reeducation camps, and more than 165,000 died as a result of the harsh conditions. Between 100,000 and 200,000 people were killed by the government, and another 50,000 were subjected to hard labor in "New Economic Zones." Millions fled the country, often in unseaworthy boats, which created an international humanitarian crisis. In 1978 Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia and overthrew the murderous Khmer Rouge, who had launched attacks on Vietnamese villages near the border. A puppet government was installed that ruled until 1989. China responded by attacking Vietnam in 1979, which prompted it to move more solidly into the orbit of the Soviet Union.

In 1986 the Communist Party of Vietnam began a program of economic reform referred to as "Renovation" (Đổi Mới). Private ownership of farms and factories was allowed, and foreign investment was encouraged. The economy began to experience slow but sustained growth, particularly in agriculture and manufacturing. Foreign investment increased, but the reforms also brought greater income disparity and did little to help the rural poor.

THICH NHAT HANH'S RELIEF EFFORTS

Thich Nhat Hanh was banned from entering the country by the governments of both North and South Vietnam during the war, and was only allowed three visits after it ended. Forced to live in exile, he continued to work for Vietnamese people who had been displaced by conflict. In France he became chair of the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation, which worked to raise world awareness of the dire situation in Vietnam and the plight of its refugees. He and his volunteers arranged sponsors for orphaned children, and he also organized high-profile activities on behalf of Vietnamese boat people. Many of those who set out to sea drowned or were robbed by unscrupulous people smugglers or pirates. Governments that feared the economic and social costs of vast numbers of refugees arriving on their shores began to push boats back out to sea, and the Communist government had a policy of imprisoning or killing people trying to escape the country.

Thich Nhat Hanh responded to the crisis by renting two boats, a cargo ship named the *Roland* and an oil tanker, the *Leapdal*. The crews took to sea to rescue Vietnamese refugees, and within a few weeks were able to save more than 800. The original plan was to take them to Guam and Australia, but as word of the operation circulated Vietnamese refugees living in camps in Malaysia and Thailand tried to reach the ships, which escalated the crisis. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the governments of Singapore and Thailand, angered by the public embarrassment caused by the incident, forced Thich Nhat Hanh to abandon the project.

In February 2005 Thich Nhat Hanh was allowed to return to Vietnam. He met with members of his *saṃgha* and traveled throughout the country. He published Vietnamese versions of four of his books and was allowed to visit his root temple, Tu Hieu Temple in Huế. He was not permitted to stay, however, and had to return to exile. A second visit was approved by the government in 2007. In meetings with government officials, he urged reconciliation to heal the wounds of war. He proposed that all overseas Vietnamese should be allowed to return, regardless of which side they were on during the war. He also officiated at ceremonies for the war dead, again without bias with respect to political or ideological affiliations. He refused to comment on the fact that members of the banned Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam remained under house arrest, which prompted criticism from its leadership. They feared that his visit would be used for propaganda purposes by the government to give a false impression that there was religious freedom in Vietnam. He

originally proposed to conduct public chanting ceremonies named "Grand Requiem for Praying Equally for All to Untie the Knots of Unjust Suffering," but government officials objected to the idea of praying for enemies. The name was changed to "Grand Requiem for Praying." In 2009 Thich Nhat Hanh was permitted another short visit, but since that time the government has refused to grant him a visa.

COMMUNITY AND COORDINATED ACTIVISM

Thich Nhat Hanh's peace activism has emphasized the importance of groups coordinating their efforts to bring about change. Throughout his life, he has worked to bring like-minded people together to form collectives aimed at putting pressure on political leaders and to engage in grassroots activities that put Buddhist ideals into practice. In 1969, as the Vietnam War was escalating, he led the Buddhist Peace Delegation to the Paris Talks. He also founded the Unified Buddhist Church (UBC), headquartered in France. This was designed as a neutral organization for Buddhists from different countries and lineages. In 1975 the UBC founded the Sweet Potatoes Meditation Centre. As word grew and people were attracted to this community, Thich Nhat Hanh and his followers decided to buy land in the Dordogne region, where in 1982 they established Plum Village (Làng Mai), which is his main place of residence today. It houses about 150 monks, nuns, and laypeople year round, and every year thousands travel there for intensive meditation training. It received its name from an orchard of plum trees planted by the residents, which became a source of income for the center.

In keeping with the traditional ideals of the Lâm Tế order, Plum Village emphasizes incorporation of meditation into everyday life. Every activity – including washing, food preparation, walking, or work – is an opportunity for mindfulness training. One should cultivate joy in all activities and be aware of the sources of happiness that are present in every moment; according to Thich Nhat Hanh, "There is no way to happiness – happiness is the way" (Nhat Hanh 2011: 21).

In 1983 Plum Village hosted its first summer meditation retreat, attended by 117 practitioners. By 2000 the number had grown to 1,800. In that same year, Thich Nhat Hanh's *saṃgha* established its first monastery in the United States , named Deer Park (Tu Viện Lộc Uyển) and located in Escondido, California. In 2007 another US center named Blue Cliff Monastery was founded in the Hudson Valley of New York. Every year meditation retreats are held in both places, attracting thousands of practitioners each.

ENGAGED BUDDHISM

According to Thich Nhat Hanh, "Buddhism is already engaged Buddhism. If it is not, it is not Buddhism" (quoted in Hunt-Perry and Fine 2000: 35). Often associated with programs of poverty alleviation or antiwar agitation, his vision of engaged Buddhism is more comprehensive: it begins with self-transformation, imbuing oneself with cultivation of peace. Peace is not merely absence of war or violence; one should strive to "become peace," to be aware of the effects of one's actions on others and on the environment and to work to ensure that thoughts and deeds accord with Buddhist ideals:

> Peace is all around us – in the world and in nature and within us – in our bodies and our spirits. Once we learn to touch this peace, we will be healed and transformed. It is not

a matter of faith; it is a matter of practice. We need only to find ways to bring our body and mind back to the present moment.

(Nhat Hanh 1996: 21)

People who train in this way have a positive effect on others and influence them toward positive attitudes and actions. Ending war begins within the mind of each individual. The seeds of conflict lie in afflicted emotions and anger, and the path to overcoming them involves confronting the ways in which we contribute to strife in our interactions with others.

This training is based on the concept of dependent arising (*pratītya-samutpāda*), which Thich Nhat Hanh refers to as "interbeing." His mindfulness practice aims at developing a sense of one's interconnectedness based on the traditional cultivation of mindfulness of body, feelings, consciousness, and phenomena. It recognizes the reality of impermanence and the absence of self of oneself and others. Because everything changes in every moment, one is able to influence the outcome of events and processes. There is no substantial self, and thus one cannot draw a line that separates oneself and one's natural concern for personal wellbeing from the external world. Individual and world interact and are intimately connected, and so breaking down the false notion of selfhood serves to expand the range of one's concern. As part of society, one who recognizes the absence of self naturally inclines toward social activism and becomes less absorbed with narrow self-interest.

Another important aspect of social engagement is active listening. Engaged Buddhists should avoid imposing their own values on others or dictating how they should change. Instead, engaged Buddhists should strive to adapt to the realities and attitudes of those with whom they interact and learn what they really need. Members of the Order of Interbeing pledge to do at least sixty days of meditation practice per year and to abide by the "Fourteen Precepts" (now referred to as "Mindfulness Trainings"):[3]

1   Openness: avoiding narrow sectarianism and ideological bias, using Buddhist teachings as guidelines for development of understanding and compassion.
2   Nonattachment to Views: based on understanding of how attachment to views leads to suffering, this involves overcoming dogmatism and being open to the perspectives of others. There is no final, absolute truth, and true understanding involves letting go, not acquiring intellectual knowledge.
3   Freedom of Thought: not forcing others, including those under our control or influence, to adopt our views. Everyone should be able to decide what to believe or not believe, and this process should be free from external coercion. It also involves dialogue and teaching carried out in a compassionate manner.
4   Awareness of Suffering: based on the first "noble truth," this recognizes the pervasiveness of suffering and examines its causes within ourselves. It seeks to combat it through cultivation of mindfulness, which is based on "conscious breathing" and walking meditation. Only through understanding the causes and effects of suffering can people begin to counteract it. By understanding our own suffering, we gain greater empathy for the sufferings of others. This practice seeks to transform suffering into "compassion, peace, and joy."
5   Compassionate, Healthy Living: true happiness is based on peace and compassion, not on accumulation of material possessions, power, or sensual pleasures. This training focuses on feeding the body with healthy foods and feeding the mind with positive

feelings and thoughts. This also includes avoidance of intoxicants as well as sensory input that leads to negative emotions, such as violent electronic games, pornographic websites, television programs and music that promote negative associations, and divisive speech. One should be mindful of the effects of one's consumption and adopt practices that are conducive to one's own well-being and that of the world.

6   Taking Care of Anger: anger is a fundamental cause of suffering and inability to communicate in a skillful way, and so one should strive to deal with it as soon as it arises, becoming aware of its causes and how one can transform them. This involves cultivation of mindfulness and restraining the impulse to respond in kind to negative words or deeds. The seeds of anger lie within and are not inherent in others or in the environment. There is nothing preordained in how one reacts to a given stimulus, and by practicing mindful breathing and walking meditation one can reduce the propensity to reflexive responses. This includes awareness of impermanence and no-self, which are combined with understanding that there is no "I" that can be attacked or defamed, and others who do things that lead to anger are responding to internal impulses of which they are generally unaware. A proper response involves training in compassion and looking to ourselves to recognize ways in which we contribute to confrontational situations.

7   Dwelling Happily in the Present Moment: human beings tend to dwell on the past and focus on the future, ignoring the present. But "life is available only in the present moment"; there is no other reality, and we should strive to live deeply in in the present, not worrying about the future or obsessing over past failures. Mindful breathing is a core aspect of this training: one focuses on the in and out breaths, working to be fully aware of the physical sensations involved. This leads to a pervasive sense of joy and peace.

8   True Community and Communication: divisiveness leads to suffering and conflict, and opening communication creates a better experience of community. Creation of community requires open and respectful communication, "listening deeply without judging or reacting," and avoiding speaking in ways that lead to discord and anger. We should look into ourselves to find the causes of conflict and keep lines of communication open, seeking ways to promote reconciliation and resolution.

9   Truthful and Loving Speech: words create both happiness and suffering, and so one should choose them carefully, aware of how what one says affects others. This reflects the precept of "correct speech," one of the components of the eightfold noble path. One should work to cultivate speech that is truthful and skillful, that promotes peace and happiness, that is motivated by compassion. Avoid pointing out others' faults and examine the bases of our own beliefs to determine whether they stand up to analysis. Do not spread rumors or speak in ways that lead to conflict, but be courageous in pointing out injustice, even if this is potentially dangerous.

10   Protecting and Nourishing the Saṃgha: community is an essential component of personal well-being and is a basis for collective action for the betterment of society. This requires understanding and compassion and avoidance of using the Saṃgha for one's one purposes or for profit. Members of a religious community should stand together against injustice, whether it affects them or only others outside the group. This training works for positive change without taking a particular side in a conflict. As with the other parts of this program, this requires cultivation of mindfulness and awareness of the interconnectedness of oneself and members of one's group and the larger society, as well as the natural environment.

11 Right Livelihood: this invokes another of the components of the eightfold noble path. The sort of work one does has karmic ramifications and influences the continuum of the mind. Jobs that cause harm to other beings should be avoided, and this includes work that negatively impacts the environment. One should be aware of the interconnectedness of economies, political systems, and societal structures and strive to consume responsibly, in ways that have positive outcomes in the world.

12 Reverence for Life: one should cultivate compassion and avoid violence. War and conflict lead to suffering and deprive others of their rights. This practice includes promoting education and meditation, as well as working to resolve conflicts between individuals, communities, nations, and religious groups. One should avoid killing or harming others and should compassionately strive to lead them in this direction. One should also avoid dogmatically following past practices and constantly look for new ways to promote peace and protect life.

13 Generosity: much of the world's suffering is caused by individuals or groups trying to gain a greater share of scarce goods at the expense of others. Exploitation of people and resources, social injustices, and oppression are the outcomes of such attitudes, and they are combatted by cultivation of generosity and seeking the happiness of others, including nonhumans and plants. It extends to the environment as a whole and requires avoidance of squandering resources or engaging in practices that cause harm as well as respect for the property and welfare of others and working to overcome the causes of suffering.

14 True Love: sex does not equal love, and one should avoid physical intimacy that is based on negative emotions or that leads to suffering, loneliness, and alienation. Body and mind are interconnected, and harmful sexual activity is motivated by afflicted thoughts. One should combat sexual abuse and respect the rights and dignity of others. Sexual misconduct tears apart families and communities and is particularly harmful to children. We should treat our own bodies with compassion and extend this attitude to others. Negative sexual desires can be combatted by effective mindfulness and cultivation of bodhisattva ideals.

The combination of activity for the betterment of the world punctuated by periods of mediation retreat is central to Thich Nhat Hanh's vision of engaged Buddhism. Following the signing of the Paris Peace Accords and his subsequent banning by the Vietnamese government, he withdrew into solitary retreat for several months in order to regain equanimity and recharge his energies. He returned to public life and activism in response to the boat people crisis, and since that time he has followed a similar pattern. His ideal of a Buddhism that merges the two poles of concrete work in the world with ongoing meditation training has struck a responsive chord among Buddhists all over the world. Every year thousands attend retreats guided by Thich Nhat Hanh or his followers, and his books are widely popular among both Buddhists and non-Buddhists. Even though he is still not allowed to visit his native Vietnam, he is one of the most influential religious leaders in the country, and his books and recorded lectures are widely circulated. He is often described by his associates and followers as a man of boundless energy and enthusiasm, but in November 2914 he suffered a major stroke, and in early 2015 he is still undergoing treatment. The prognosis is uncertain, but his doctors have indicated that due to his generally good health and enthusiasm he may make a full recovery.

NOTES

1 Kenneth Kraft (1992: 18) reports that Thich Nhat Hanh published a book entitled *Engaged Buddhism* in 1963, but I have been unable to find any library references to it.

2 From the Order of Interbeing website: http://www.orderofinterbeing.org/about/our-history/ (accessed November 29, 2014).

3 From the Order of Interbeing website: http://www.orderofinterbeing.org/for-the-aspirant/ fourteen-mindfulness-trainings/ (accessed November 25, 2014).

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MASTER YINSHUN

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Bhikkhu Bodhi

INTRODUCTION

Master Yinshun 印順導師 (1906–2005) was one of the most influential Chinese scholar-monks of the twentieth century. His monastic career spanned seventy-five years, spent on the mainland, in Hong Kong, and in Taiwan. He was the first Chinese monk to apply the critical historical method to the study of Buddhism and one of the first to take Indian rather than Chinese Buddhism as his field of investigation. His published works, in over forty volumes, cover virtually the entire range of Indian Buddhism, from its origins to its demise. His philosophy of "Human-Realm Buddhism" (Renjian Fojiao 人間佛教) has set the parameters that have shaped the contemporary expression of Buddhism in Taiwan and elsewhere in the Chinese Buddhist world.

YINSHUN'S EARLY LIFE AND INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

Surprisingly, Yinshun did not come from a Buddhist background but had to discover the Dharma on his own at the end of a long spiritual search. He was born in 1906 into a farming family of modest means in a small village in Zhejiang province, not far from Shanghai. His lay name was Zhang Luqin 張鹿芹. Because his family was not rich, he could continue his schooling only through his thirteenth year, completing the equivalent of an American middle-school education. After leaving school, he began to study Chinese medicine.

His spiritual quest started with an interest in Daoist techniques for prolonging life. His search led him from Daoism to Confucianism, then to Christianity, and then back to Daoism. In 1925, while reading the preface to a Daoist classic, he came across a sentence stating that the works of Zhuangzi and their commentaries were forerunners of Buddhism. These words triggered in him a compelling urge to learn more about the Dharma. With difficulty, he managed to acquire a few books on Buddhist philosophy, mainly sūtra commentaries and tracts on Madhyamaka and Yogācāra thought. These were far beyond his comprehension, but as he struggled to understand them he began to glimpse the splendor of the Dharma and knew this was the path he had to take to quench his spiritual thirst.

In 1928 his mother died, and his father passed away the next year. Thus in 1930, at the age of 25, he decided to become a monk. This, however, wasn't easy. In his hometown, he found that the temple monks only performed ceremonies for blessings, and their lifestyle was not much different from that of laymen. No monks taught sūtras or gave lectures on the Dharma. He thus ran straight into a problem with which he was to grapple throughout his life: namely, the "enormous gap" between the Buddha's teaching and the embodiment of Buddhism in the actual world (SYV 2009: 33). This discrepancy inspired in him a resolve to learn the genuine Dharma, purify Buddhism, and spread the true teaching.

After several frustrating efforts to find a place to ordain, in November 1930 he received novice ordination under Elder Qingnian at Fuquan Monastery of Putuoshan in Fujian province. He was given the monastic name Yinshun. The next year he received full ordination. Keen on study, in spring of 1931 he enrolled at the Minnan Institute of Buddhist Studies in Xiamen. This institute had been founded by the Buddhist reformer and activist, Master Taixu 太虛 (1890–1947), whom Yinshun came to regard as his spiritual mentor and the chief inspiration in his life as a monk.

In his first year at Minnan his keen grasp of Buddhist doctrine caught the attention of his teachers and he was asked to give lectures. Worried that this new responsibility would distract him from his studies, he left the Minnan Institute for Putuoshan. Here he spent three years (1932–36) at the Tripiṭaka Tower of Huiri Monastery devoting himself to the study of the Chinese Tripiṭaka (Buddhist canon). It was during this period, he writes, that "I discovered the vibrant variety of approaches to the Buddha Dharma" that were like "'hundreds of flowers bursting into a pageant of blossoms' and 'thousands of mountain cliffs competing in a beauty contest'" (SYV 2009: 36–37). In 1937, while residing at Wuchang Buddhist Institute, he came across modern studies of Indian Buddhism by Japanese scholars. These books provided him with a new impetus. He now saw that his task would be "to understand the origin and evolution of the Buddha Dharma in relation to definite historical eras and regions of the actual human world" (SYV 2009: 37).

YINSHUN'S PROPAGATION OF BUDDHISM

In 1938, as Japanese forces pushed more deeply into China, Yinshun moved inland to Sichuan province, where he lived for eight years. Four were spent at the Institute of Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Doctrines in Jinyun Shan, another of Taixu's establishments. In 1947, he returned to the southeast to participate in the aftermath of Taixu's passing. Over the next year he compiled the *Master Taixu Corpus* (太虛大師全書), a collection of his master's works. In 1949, when China fell to the Communists, he left for Hong Kong, and in 1952 moved to Taiwan, where he lived for the rest of his life.

In Taiwan in 1953 he founded Fuyan Vihāra (福嚴精舍) in Xinzhu, which evolved into a monastic institute of Buddhist studies. He also established Huiri Lecture Hall (慧日講堂) in Taipei. For eighteen months (1956–1957) he served as abbot of the large Shandao Monastery (善導寺) in Taipei. Between 1953 and 1973 he was director of the Buddhist magazine *Haichaoyin* 海潮音, "Sound of the Tide." Despite the respect he was receiving, Yinshun felt dissatisfied with his life during his first twelve years on the island. By temperament inclined to scholarship, writing, and teaching, he found himself saddled with administrative duties and religious obligations that went against the grain of his character.

Seeking greater solitude, in 1964 he retreated to Miaoyun Vihāra in Jiayi, southern Taiwan, where he could devote his time to study, contemplation, and writing. In 1971–1972, however,

he became gravely ill and went to the United States to convalesce for six months. After returning to Taiwan, he lived in seclusion in Taichung (1973–1978). During this period he edited and published the twenty-four-volume *Miaoyunji* 妙雲集 (*Wondrous Cloud Collection*), his best-known literary collection. In 1978 he established the Huayü Vihāra in Taichung and spent his last years alternating between this abode and another small temple in Nantou.

On June 4, 2005, after a period of declining health, Yinshun expired at the Tzu Chi Hospital in Hualian. On the Chinese way of reckoning, which counts one's years starting from birth, he was 100 years of age; ninety-nine according to the Western system. His body was displayed for a week at Fuyan Vihāra in Xinzhu, where thousands of people came to pay their final respects. On June 10 his body was cremated and the remains were deposited at Fuyan.

YINSHUN THE SCHOLAR

Yinshun's role in modern Chinese Buddhism might be summed up under three headings: a scholar, a formulator of Buddhist hermeneutics, and a revitalizer. Though the three are intimately interwoven in his work, I will treat each separately. Yinshun's understanding of Buddhism is complex, and his main ideas are distributed across his many books and essays. Nevertheless, in his late years he wrote two slim volumes that review his earlier achievements and restate the conclusions that emerged from his studies. One is *A Sixty-Year Spiritual Voyage on the Ocean of Dharma* (*Youxin Fahai liushi nian* 遊心法海六十年), written in 1984 on the eve of his eightieth year. The other is *A Timely Teaching of the Timeless Truth: Human-Realm Buddhism* (*Qili qiji zhi Renjian Fojiao* 契理契機之人間佛教), written in 1989. While the former is semi-autobiographical, the latter reviews the main strands in his understanding of Buddhism. Both works quote extensively from his major writings and thus offer a convenient summary of his philosophy.

As a scholar, as mentioned above, Yinshun took Indian Buddhism as his field of inquiry. However, he did not pursue his research from a purely disinterested standpoint. Rather, he was motivated by a practical agenda. From the time he first encountered the Dharma he had been troubled by the morbidity he observed in the Chinese Buddhism of his time and had pondered whether the decline of Buddhism was due to Chinese influence or had already started in India.

To answer this question, he embarked on an intensive study of Indian Buddhism, which led him to conclude that Buddhism had already fallen from its original purity in India and that the decline had only intensified with time. His first major work, *Buddhism in India* (*Yindu zhi Fojiao* 印度之佛教), published in 1942, delineates the evolution of Indian Buddhism in order to determine exactly how and why this deterioration occurred. The book thus goes beyond the simple recording of objective facts to embark on a sophisticated inquiry into the criteria to be used to distinguish the authentic principles of the Dharma from its deviations. I will discuss these below in the section on Yinshun's hermeneutics.

Apart from his broad overview of Indian Buddhism, Yinshun also made detailed studies of individual Buddhist texts, always aiming "to pin down the original meanings of the Indian scriptures and to trace their developments" (SYV 2009: 41). His prodigious output is all the more impressive given that Yinshun was plagued by persistent illness all his life. He suffered from poor digestion, intestinal problems, acute circulatory failures, fatigue, and tuberculosis. Poor health often interrupted his studies, writing, and lecturing activities, sometimes for several years on end (SYV 2009: 29).

Already during his stay at Tripiṭaka Tower he had discovered the Āgamas (the counterparts of the Pāli Nikāyas preserved in Chinese translations). These had long been dismissed by Chinese monks as mere "Hīnayāna" (Lesser Vehicle) teaching, but Yinshun looked at them in a new light, seeing them as the indispensable source for uncovering the original insights of the Buddha. His exposure to the Āgamas and the Vinaya (monastic code) filled him with "a feeling of intimate familiarity with the actual human world" (SYV 2009: 37), so different from the emphasis on faith and high ideals he found in the Mahāyāna ("Greater Vehicle") sūtras.

His studies in Indian Buddhism ranged from the Āgamas and Vinaya to the Abhidharma ("Higher Doctrine," scholastic treatises based on discourses attributed to the Buddha; see the chapter by Walser in this volume), the Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā) literature, other Mahāyāna sūtras, and the philosophical literature of the Middle Way School (Madhyamaka), Consciousness Only (Vijñānavāda), and Womb of Thus Gone Ones (Tathāgatagarbha, the notion that all beings have the potential to become buddhas) systems. He wrote a three-volume study of the Saṃyuktāgama, the counterpart of the Pāli Saṃyutta Nikāya, in which he attempted to unravel the proper structure of this work, which was confused in the Chinese canon. His output includes the 800-page *A Study of the Abhidharma Literature (Primarily the Sarvāstivādin) and Its Masters* (*Shuo yiqie youbu weizhu de lunshu yu lunshi zhi yanjiu* 說一切有部為主的論書與論師之研究); an 800-page volume on *The Compilation and Establishment of the Early Buddhist Canon* (*Yuanshi Fojiao shengdian zhi jicheng* 原始佛教聖典之集成); and a 1,500-page work entitled *The Origin and Development of Early Mahāyāna Buddhism* (*Chuqi Dasheng Fojiao zhi qiyuan yu kaizhan* 初期大乘佛教之起源與開展; see §2.5.5). His later essays are collected into a five-volume set, the *Huayüji* 華雨集 (*Flower Rain Collection*). He wrote independent studies on emptiness and the womb of thus gone ones (*tathāgata-garbha*) doctrine, each undertaken from both historical and philosophical perspectives. *A History of the Chan School of China* (*Zhongguo chanzongshi* 中國禪宗史), one of his very few books on Chinese Buddhism, won him a doctorate degree from Taisho University in Japan in 1973.

In his essay "Applying the Dharma in Studying the Dharma" (*Yi fofa yanjiu fofa* 以佛法研究佛法), Yinshun advocates using the "three Dharma seals" of impermanence, selflessness, and nirvana as guidelines to Buddhist scholarship (STMY 7; 2006: 1–37; see SYV 2009: 79–83). The principle of impermanence entails recognizing the inevitability of change as Buddhism adapted to the different cultures, times, and regions where it set down roots. This standpoint frees the researcher from a narrowly historical perspective and promotes an appreciation of the efforts of successive generations of Buddhist thinkers to fathom the true meaning of the Dharma. The principle of non-self implies that the researcher "does not obstinately fix on a personal bias and approach research with a (predetermined) view" (SYV 2009: 81). This attitude allows the scholar to grasp the complexity of Buddhism, to see how the Dharma, though having one flavor, has inevitably divided into different branches that separate and evolve, at times again flowing together. The third seal, nirvana as quiescence, implies that the researcher should take nirvana as the ideal and goal of research (SYV 2009: 82–83).

YINSHUN'S HERMENEUTICS

Yinshun stressed that the intention behind his textual studies was not to expound his own point of view or to filter the text through the standpoint of a particular sect. He wanted,

rather, to allow each text or system to speak for itself. Nevertheless, while adopting this stance, his scholarly pursuits were always driven by the original ideal that motivated his life as a monk, namely, to purify Buddhism of its corruptions so it could shine with a new glory. He wrote:

> I am not a member or descendant of a school or sect; nor am I an ideologue or one who favors any particular method of practice. I study for the sake of the Buddha Dharma. I study for the sake of adapting the Buddha Dharma to modern times. Therefore, in the development of Buddhism, I search for the threads that run through its evolution in order to understand the many facets and expressions it has taken in different times and to make the distinction and selection [of the teachings] that are purer and more suited for modern times.
>
> (TT: chap. 5)

The task of distinguishing the "pure" Dharma from deviations requires standards for making accurate assessments. To meet this need, Yinshun's work lays down a rigorous hermeneutic that is intended to be at once comprehensive yet critical and discerning. His hermeneutic attempts to endorse all manifestations of Buddhism that meet his standards of authenticity, while at the same time pinpointing the corrosive elements that cause the teaching to decline and degenerate. This project thus involves a theoretical essentialism which maintains that there are genuine and spurious versions of the Dharma and ascertainable criteria for distinguishing them. It is also intended to provide guidelines for discarding the aberrations and thereby allowing the Buddha's intention to unfold.

Yinshun maintains that while we must be *acute enough* to grasp the essential principles and practices of the Dharma as derived from the Buddha's own conduct and special insights, we must also be *flexible enough* not to insist on rigidly adhering to archaic historical forms but recognize that Buddhism inevitably has to adapt to the different cultures in which it set down roots. He calls for careful discrimination, based on study and reflection, to isolate and remove the pernicious developments and open up fresh roads for the healthy elements to flourish under changing historical and cultural conditions. The chief problem, in Yinshun's view, is with the "expedient means" (*fangbian* 方便; Skt *upāya*) that have been used to accommodate the Dharma to the capacities and interests of the people being taught. He holds that "Buddhism cannot avoid the use of expedient means," but "one must scrutinize each of them meticulously and make a rigorous distinction as to whether it is a normal adaptation, an aberrant development, or a virulent adulteration [of the original teaching]" (SYV 2009: 44).

Yinshun's hermeneutic is grounded on his division of Indian Buddhism into five periods: (1) the *śrāvaka-based period* when there was a united aim at liberation; (2) the *bodhisattva-inclined period* as it was branching off from the disciple (*śrāvaka*) tradition; (3) the *bodhisattva-based period* during which the Mahāyāna and the disciple traditions were both being promulgated; (4) *the Tathāgata-inclined period* as it was branching off from the bodhisattva tradition; and (5) the *Tathāgata-based period* when the deification of the Buddha had advanced and esoteric practices became popular. He compresses these five periods into three major eras, which he calls Buddhadharma, Mahāyāna Buddhadharma, and Esoteric Mahāyāna Buddhadharma. The *Buddhadharma* era covers the first and the second of the five periods, which are also known as Early Buddhism and Sectarian Buddhism. *Mahāyāna Buddhadharma* covers the third and the fourth periods, which are

distinguished as Early Mahāyāna and Later Mahāyāna; the former teaches the doctrine of "everything is empty," the latter that the "ten thousand dharmas are mere-mind." *Esoteric Mahāyāna*, having its distinct characteristics, is established as a separate category (TT: chap. 2). On the basis of these distinctions, Yinshun lays down his guiding ideal in a statement first announced in *Buddhism in India* and repeated in later works. The statement might be considered his personal credo:

> Set roots in the simplicity of root-period Buddhism; propagate the practice and the insights of middle-period Buddhism (being cautious of the Brahmanic orientation); and adopt the correct and suitable portion of later-period Buddhism. Thus, with hope, we are able to reinvigorate the Buddhist religion and fully convey the original intention of the Buddha!
>
> (SYV 2009: 46; TT: chap. 1)

Yinshun regarded the arising, growth, and decline of Indian Buddhism as comparable to the stages in a person's life. The first period is like innocent childhood, the middle period like the vigorous prime of life, and the third like old age. Just as one might affirm the vitality and purity of childhood but consider the vigorous prime of life more meaningful, so he respected Early Buddhism but held the Early Mahāyāna to represent a more mature and complete expression of the Buddha's intention. He did not ascribe priority to the most archaic versions of the Dharma, nor did he regard doctrinal development as invariably positive: "I don't say that the earlier a teaching appeared the truer it is, nor am I sympathetic to the view that the later a teaching appeared the more complete and closer to the ultimate it is" (SYV 2009: 88). The purpose behind his historical research was always to extract from the scriptures and treatises the principles of perennial value and offer them in ways tailored to the needs of the modern world:

> I pay attention to uncovering the old [teachings] in the hope of "piercing through both ends" (not being biased toward either the Mahāyāna or the Hīnayāna but able to connect to both) so that the Buddha Dharma, along the right path in this human life, may be gradually fitted with new adaptive means and thus spread and expand!
>
> (TT: chap. 1)

His treatise, *The Way to Buddhahood* (*Chengfo zhi dao* 成佛之道), a large volume in the *Collection of Wonderful Clouds* (*Miaoyunji* 妙雲集), is a masterwork of synthesis that attempts to integrate all the teachings of mainstream Indian Buddhism into a coherent whole. It takes as its framework the concept of the "five vehicles" developed by Taixu on the basis of older sources. Using this framework, Yinshun first expounds the "Dharma common to the five vehicles," which includes wholesome principles shared by all religions affirming ethical values and the aspiration for a happy rebirth. Then he moves on to the "Dharma common to the three vehicles," which emphasizes the doctrines of Early Buddhism and the specifically Buddhist path aimed at liberation from the round of rebirths. Finally, he discusses the "unique Dharma of the Great Vehicle," which comprises the bodhisattva's vows and the practices aimed at buddhahood. Under this last heading, in the section on the perfection of wisdom (*prajñā-pāramitā*), Yinshun attempts to integrate the three major philosophical systems of Mahāyāna in a way that respects the validity of each. He gives priority to the Madhyamaka school, which he calls the system of "empty nature and mere names." But he also contends

that the other two systems – the Yogic Practice (Yogācāra) philosophy of "false imagination and mere consciousness" and the womb of thus gone ones (*tathāgata-garbha*) tradition of "true permanence and mere mind" – can be treated as provisional stepping stones to ultimate realization. He compares the three respectively to pure medicine, sugar-coated medicine, and medicine sweetened and fashioned into intriguing forms (WTB 1998: 326).

Despite his openness, Yinshun regarded later forms of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially of the esoteric type, as beset by symptoms of decrepitude. In his view, late Indian Buddhism had gone too far in bending its core principles to fit the Indian religious milieu. These deviations included the elevation of the buddhas and bodhisattvas to the status of divine beings; the emphasis on ritual and incantations; and the sensualistic rites of Tantric Buddhism. He also rejected the reification of such ideas as *tathāgata-garbha*, buddha-nature, and mind-only. He could countenance such notions as long as they were seen as "expedients" to attract and console those not yet ready for the radical teachings of non-self and emptiness. But, he held, if they are taken to signify a substantial ultimate reality, they become surrogates for the *ātman*, the supreme and immutable self of brahmanism, which is contrary to the central Buddhist tenets of dependent origination and non-self.

YINSHUN THE REVITALIZER

Yinshun did not seek to revive older forms of Buddhism that had already lost their vitality. His aim, rather, was to formulate the blueprint for new expressions of the Dharma that would be faithful to its original spirit but pliant enough to meet the novel needs of the modern era. For Yinshun, Buddhism from its origins had a distinctly human orientation, as seen in its rationality, pragmatism, stress on ethics, altruistic values, and focus on the integration of spirituality with all aspects of human life. Yet, he feared, this human orientation was constantly in jeopardy of being diluted by the absorption of quasi-theistic ideas and practices, among them mystification, esotericism, and deification. These, he believed, undermine the distinctly "human-centric" character of the authentic Dharma.

The text that opened Yinshun's eyes to Buddhism's human-centric stance was a passage in the Ekottarikāgama, which he discovered during his early years as a monk: "Buddhas arise in the human realm. Ultimately they do not attain buddhahood in the heavenly realm." This passage gave him a sense of the direction he should take to cleanse the Dharma of its harmful accretions. He called the program he envisaged "Human-Realm Buddhism."

This designation mirrored the name that Taixu had given to his own reform agenda, "Buddhism for Human Life" (*rensheng Fojiao* 人生佛教), but despite points of contact, the two projects had different aims. Taixu's "Buddhism for Human Life" was intended as an antidote to the tendency in Chinese Buddhism to use the Dharma as a means to a pleasant rebirth and a protection against ghosts. Yinshun's "Human-Realm Buddhism" had deeper ramifications. Its purpose was to counter the tendency towards deification that had already crept into Buddhism during its history in India and persisted in its Chinese embodiment. Human-Realm Buddhism stresses the unique opportunity that human life offers for the pursuit and attainment of the ultimate Buddhist goal, which is nothing less than buddhahood itself. This means that a revitalized Buddhism has to rediscover the ideal of the human-realm bodhisattva, who for Yinshun is the paradigmatic Dharma practitioner.

The central thesis of Yinshun's Human-Realm Buddhism is expressed by the formula: "human to bodhisattva to buddha" (*ren, pusa, fo* 人，菩薩，佛). This means that, starting from one's position as an ordinary person still subject to defilements, one generates

bodhicitta, the compassionate resolve to attain buddhahood for the welfare of all beings; one then cultivates the bodhisattva path by practicing altruistic deeds until one attains buddhahood. Even the most ordinary person, Yinshun holds, can give rise to this intention and enter the path to buddhahood by engaging in the ten ways of wholesome action. He extols Human-Realm Buddhism as

> a gradual path where human beings practice the bodhisattva way in their ordinary life. Hence there is no contradiction between the two. The way of the bodhisattva will not obstruct the progress of our daily life. Instead, our mundane life becomes a demonstration of the bodhisattva way.
>
> (STMY 5; 2001: 47)

In several essays he holds up as models of the human-realm bodhisattva such literary figures as the householder Vimalakīrti, who could engage in the most diverse mundane activities while upholding his bodhisattva vows, and the youth Sudhana of the *Flower Garland Discourse* (*Avataṃsaka Sūtra*), who traveled around India seeking guidance from fifty-three teachers, most of whom were ordinary people following the bodhisattva path in daily life. In modern times he regarded his mentor Taixu as the outstanding example of a flesh-and-blood human-realm bodhisattva.

Drawing from the Mahāyāna scriptures, Yinshun posited that the practice of the human-realm bodhisattva path requires cultivation of three spiritual faculties: faith, compassion, and wisdom (TT: chap. 9). Faith in the greatness of the Buddha motivates the aspirant to generate *bodhicitta*, the resolve to attain buddhahood. Compassion drives the bodhisattva's altruistic deeds, which culminate in the Buddha's work of liberating beings from suffering. Wisdom gives insight into emptiness, which is based on dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*, the doctrine that phenomena come into being, alter, and pass away in dependence on causes and conditions). All three qualities are necessary and must be brought into balance. Because people's inclinations differ, inevitably some practitioners will stress one faculty rather than the others. Hence Buddhism offers different "Dharma doors" or approaches to practice for people with different capacities. Beneath their differences, however, all authentic methods are intended to guide people toward the perfect integration of the three qualities represented by buddhahood.

Yinshun proposed Human-Realm Buddhism as the answer to the decadence that had infected Chinese Buddhism. He saw it not only as an antidote to the obsession with protective charms and funeral rites that prevailed among Chinese Buddhists of his time, but also as an alternative to the pessimism and world abnegation typical of Chinese Buddhism for centuries; in his view this attitude had contributed to Buddhism's decline and loss of relevance. Yinshun was profoundly shaken by a statement that Taixu had made in 1940 after returning from a trip to the Theravāda countries of southern Asia. Impressed by the enthusiasm with which Theravāda Buddhists carried out social, cultural, educational, and propagation work, Taixu said:

> Chinese Buddhism advocates the Mahāyāna theory but is unable to practice it … The phenomenon of advocating the Mahāyāna teachings while cultivating the Hīnayāna practice is widespread in China. … Although [the Southern Buddhist countries] advocate the Hīnayāna teachings, they are cultivating the Mahāyāna practice.
>
> (STMY 7, 2006: 307)

Taixu refers here to the widespread belief in Chinese Buddhism that serious Dharma practice requires that one withdraw from worldly affairs and devote oneself exclusively to meditation aimed at personal awakening. While reflecting on these words, Yinshun pondered how it was possible for Chinese Buddhism to have reached the point where it was Mahāyāna only in theory but in practice displayed the "Hīnayāna" spirit. His late essay, "A Discussion on Buddhist Studies and the Integration with the World" (Tan rushi yu Foxue 談入世與佛學; STMY 7, 2006: 300–504), attempts to answer this question at length.

Yinshun begins by briefly recapitulating the historical evolution of Buddhism. He notes that Early Buddhism, based on the insight that everything in the cycle of rebirths is impermanent, suffering, and non-self, steers the practitioner away from worldly involvements toward liberation from birth and death. Yinshun recognizes that there were diverse trends in the early teachings and admits that followers of Early Buddhism also propagated the Dharma to benefit sentient beings. However, he holds, over time the renunciant ideal prevailed, driving the altruistic emphasis to the sidelines. In monastic circles the conviction gained ground that integration with worldly affairs and liberation are two different projects that are utterly incompatible. Fidelity to the Dharma requires that one forsake the former in order to pursue the latter.

This attitude provoked a reaction among those Buddhists, largely laypeople, who looked for inspiration to the compassionate deeds of the Buddha and the stories of his past lives as a bodhisattva. This trend culminated in the emergence of the Early Mahāyāna, which sought to merge the world-transcending and world-engaging sides of the teaching. The Early Mahāyāna held that "integration with the world is not different from renouncing the worldly," that "one can rely on the worldly to reach world renunciation, and after renouncing the worldly, one does not keep aloof from the worldly" (STMY 7, 2006: 319–21).

However, the spirit of the Early Mahāyāna, with its call to postpone one's own awakening for eons in order to help others as a bodhisattva, proved too demanding for certain people keen on quick realization. There thus arose a new type of Mahāyāna that styled itself "the highest and most complete Great Vehicle." This "perfect Mahāyāna" advocated innate perfection, utterly simple practices, and instantaneous awakening. It urged unrelenting effort to attain realization and liberation in this very life. In Yinshun's eyes, "the most distinctive feature of this Buddhism was that it resurrected the spirit of egoistic and hasty enlightenment." It differed from classical Hīnayāna Buddhism only in that it replaced the hurried quest to attain arahantship with a hurried quest for buddhahood (STMY 7, 2006: 327). Once this ideology took root, the belief arose that "those who are truly practicing will certainly practice wholeheartedly and won't waste time on worldly affairs" (STMY 7, 2006: 335).

It was this type of Buddhism that gained ascendency in the late phase of Indian Buddhism. It also spread to China and lent its flavor to the Buddhism that Yinshun observed around him. Its negative attitude, individualism, and world denial explain how Taixu could say that while Chinese Buddhists advocate the Mahāyāna, their practice is essentially Hīnayāna. Yinshun did not resonate at all with this style of Buddhist practice, which he considered contrary to the Buddha's real intention. He called instead for a return to the spirit of the Early Mahāyāna, which promoted integration of world renunciation and world engagement.

In Yinshun's view, "the real bodhisattva aspiration is derived from loving-kindness and compassion" (STMY 7, 2006: 353). It is based on *bodhicitta*, the compassionate resolve to attain awakening for the benefit of all, and is expressed in altruistic deeds. The practitioner who has given rise to *bodhicitta* can engage in all upright worldly affairs with sincerity, dedication, and courage, intent on helping relieve the sufferings of sentient beings. Thus in

Yinshun's Human-Realm Buddhism, "all the right undertakings in this world can be of benefit to sentient beings. They are the undertakings of a bodhisattva, the teaching places to educate others, and finally the causal practice to attain buddhahood" (STMY 7, 2006: 373).

In formulating his program of Human-Realm Buddhism, Yinshun pointed to three tendencies in today's world to which Buddhism must respond if it is to recover its vitality: (1) since the present is *a time of the young*, when young people have become leaders in society, Buddhism must emphasize altruism to appeal to people in the vigorous prime of their lives; (2) since this is *a time of world engagement*, those who cultivate bodhisattva practice should engage in deeds that benefit humankind and broadcast the voice of the Dharma; they should seek awakening without abandoning the affairs of the world; and (3) since this is *a time when organizations have become prominent*, not only should the monastic system become more adaptive, but lay followers must form healthy organizations to undertake activities that benefit others as well as themselves (STMY 5, 2001: 71–97; TT: chap. 9).

Yinshun's program of Human-Realm Buddhism served an important purpose for Buddhists in Taiwan during the period when his writing flourished. As one of the leading Buddhist intellectuals among the Chinese refugees from the mainland, he would have faced the challenge of making the Dharma relevant to a country still mired in poverty, struggling to find its economic niche amidst the ring of highly competitive Asian countries around it. And just across the sea was the giant People's Republic demanding unification under the umbrella of materialistic communism. Buddhists had to find their own voice, with pressure coming on one side from an assertive secular modernism, and on the other from Christian evangelists intent on making converts among Buddhists. Yinshun's Human-Realm Buddhism set forth a vision that could underscore the lofty spiritual heritage of Buddhism while motivating Taiwanese Buddhists to actively participate in national development.

The question facing Buddhists in Taiwan today, in this "Post-Yinshun" era, is how to articulate the Dharma against a background of relative material affluence. Attempts to answer this question have seen Buddhists splinter into several factions. There are those who prefer a more ostentatious assertion of Buddhist identity through elaborate ceremonies and large ornate temples. Others, under the banner of the bodhisattva ideal, devote their efforts to humanitarian service inspired by an activist mode of Buddhist piety. Still others take an inward turn toward meditation and contemplative spirituality, sometimes repudiating their Chinese Buddhist heritage to adopt Theravādan or Tibetan Buddhist practices. Whether a healthy synthesis can be forged from this diversity is a question yet to be answered, but the principles Yinshun laid down can provide a broad platform for implementing such a project within the embrace of the Indo-Chinese Buddhist tradition.

YINSHUN'S INFLUENCE

Being by nature a scholar and contemplative rather than an administrator or man of action, Yinshun personally ordained only a few students during his monastic career. Among those whom he did ordain, Ven. Houguan 厚觀 continues to administer Fuyan Institute for Buddhist Studies in Xinzhu and the Huire Lecture Hall in Taipei. In this endeavor he is assisted by a group of senior monks who, though not personally ordained by Yinshun, accept his approach to the Dharma and seek to educate younger monks along the lines he established. Fuyan Institute attracts monks from temples throughout Taiwan as well as from other countries where Chinese Buddhism flourishes, such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam.

Beyond the walls of Fuyan, Yinshun's corpus of works forms the backbone of Buddhist studies in almost all institutes of higher learning in Taiwan and other countries where Chinese Buddhism flourishes. His use of the critical and historical method has become mandatory among Chinese monastic intellectuals, even with those who do not agree with his conclusions. During his life, Yinshun's writings provoked resentment and a backlash. This took place particularly in traditionalist circles where his critique of mainstream Chinese Buddhist tradition was opposed by those who upheld the distinctly Chinese forms of Buddhism against Yinshun's preference for Indian Buddhism and his reliance on the Āgamas and early Abhidharma. In fact, when Yinshun arrived in Taipei to take charge of Shandao Temple, a large number of adherents of the Pure Land sect gathered and burned copies of his book on Pure Land Buddhism (Pittman 2001: 269). Over the past few decades this antagonism has largely subsided, but traces may still linger on.

Yinshun's conception of Human-Realm Buddhism profoundly resonates with the thought of several other seminal figures in contemporary Buddhism in Taiwan. The most prominent among them in this respect are Master Hsing Yun (Xingyun) 星雲 (1927–), the founder of Fo Guang Shan, and the late Chan Master Sheng Yen (Shengyan) 聖嚴 (1930–2009), founder of Dharma Drum Mountain. It is hard to determine whether these monks were directly influenced by Yinshun himself or by his mentor Taixu, but both Hsing Yun and Sheng Yen formulated versions of Buddhism that encourage social service, Dharma propagation, environmental protection, and education. They thus continue the type of pragmatic, world-engaged Buddhism initiated by the two older masters.

The nun Master Cheng Yen (Zhengyan) 證嚴 (1937–), the founder and guiding light of the Tzu Chi Foundation, traces her inspiration directly to Yinshun. As a young woman intent on leading a religious life, she had shaved her own head and settled at a temple near Hualian in eastern Taiwan. In 1963, she went to Taipei to participate in an ordination ceremony but was rejected on the ground that she did not have a tonsure master. Before she left the city, by sheer chance she met Yinshun in the street and appealed to him to accept her as a disciple. After speaking with her for a while, Yinshun declared: "I sense that our karmic connection as master and disciple is very special. Since you have become a nun, you must live at all times for Buddhism and for sentient beings." He then accepted her as a disciple and gave her the monastic name Cheng Yen. Quickly returning to the monastery in Taipei, she participated in the ordination ceremony (Pittman 2001: 287–88).

At Hualian, Cheng Yen and several other nuns who studied with her established a small organization to help the poor. Their aim was "to put into practice Buddhism's spirit of compassionate service to save the world" (Pittman 2001: 288–89). Their initial support base was a group of thirty housewives who set aside a small amount of grocery money each day to care for needy families. From these simple beginnings, the group has grown to become a major international relief organization, with approximately ten million members and chapters in forty-seven countries, including several in the U.S. Tzu Chi supports many forms of relief work and social service throughout the world. It has provided medical services and emergency relief in China, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Thailand, Mongolia, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, and elsewhere.

What inspires Cheng Yen's activities is her conviction that Buddhists have a responsibility to alleviate suffering. She says that "Buddhism is a positive and active way of living and we Buddhists would continue with our good deeds to help the suffering masses and bring joy to those living in sorrow" (quoted by Pittman 2001: 287). Certainly this conviction echoes Yinshun's ideal of the human-realm bodhisattva.[1]

NOTE

1   I thank Yu-Jung L. Avis for reviewing this chapter and providing me with factual information.

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Note on the Translations

For reasons of style, I have slightly modified the translations referred to above, doing so with reference to the Chinese text. I use the *hanyü pinyin* system to transliterate Chinese words, except for certain personal names that are widely known in a different form.

TENZIN GYATSO, THE FOURTEENTH DALAI LAMA

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John Powers

INTRODUCTION: THE DALAI LAMA INSTITUTION

The Tibetan institution of reincarnating lamas (*sprul sku*; pronounced *tülku*) began in the thirteenth century when Rangjung Dorje (Rang ’byung rdo rje, 1284–1339) was recognized as the rebirth (*yang srid*) of Karma Pakshi (1204/6–1283) and thus became the third Gyelwa Karmapa (rGyal dbang Karmapa). There were previous examples of people being identified with deceased masters and some unofficial recognitions of rebirths, but this was the first case of a such a recognition of a child. In making this move, the Karma Kagyu (Karma bKa’ brgyud) order was taking a significant gamble: if the boy had turned out to be a reprobate or a fool – or even if he were merely of mediocre abilities and unable to meet the high expectations expected of Karma Pakshi’s successor – it could have been disastrous for them.

Fortunately for the Karma Kagyupas, Rangjung Dorje turned out to be one of the outstanding religious figures of his time, and he wrote poetry and philosophical treatises that remain influential today. He also became an advisor to some of the most powerful political figures in the region, including Mongol khans. As a result, his order profited through patronage and military support. Other Buddhist factions soon recognized the potential benefits of this new institution, and a proliferation of reincarnating lamas began. Today there are thousands of lineages that range from minor figures who are associated with a particular region or monastery to the three most prominent ones: the Dalai Lamas, the Karmapas, and the Panchen Lamas (Paṇ chen bla ma).

The first of these are best known internationally by the term “Dalai Lama” (Tā la’i bla ma), but Tibetans more commonly refer to them with the titles Gyelwa Rinpoche (rGyal ba rin po che, “Precious Lord”) or Kundun (Kun ’dun, “Fulfiller of All Wishes”). The term Dalai Lama was given to the third member of the lineage, Sönam Gyatso (bSod nams rgya mtsho, 1543–1588), by the Mongol chieftain Altan Khan (1507–1583). It is a combination of the Mongol word for ocean and the Tibetan term *bla ma*, “religious teacher.” It is a shortening and Tibetan adaptation of a Mongolian title, “*Ghaikhamsigh vcir-a dar-a say-in cogh-tu buyan-tu dalai*” (Wondrous Vajradhara, Good, Brilliant, Admirable Ocean). After it was conferred, the title was retroactively applied to Sönam Gyatso’s two predecessors, Gendün Druba (dGe ’dun grub pa, 1391–1474) and Gendün Gyatso (dGe ’dun rgya mtsho,

1476–1542). The conferral of the title had no real impact on Sönam Gyatso's status or religious standing; the granting of grandiose titles was a common aspect of diplomatic exchanges between rulers, religious leaders, and dignitaries.

The fourth Dalai Lama, Yönden Gyatso (Yon tan rgya mtsho, 1589–1616), was discovered in Altan's family, and this forged an enduring linkage between Mongol rulers and future Dalai Lamas. When the fifth Dalai Lama, Ngawang Losang Gyatso (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1617–1682), became ruler of Tibet, this was accomplished with the help of Mongol forces led by Gushri Khan (1582–1655). The Dalai Lamas remained (at least nominally) the heads of government except for periods of civilian rule until 1959, when the People's Republic of China officially dissolved the Tibetan government.

According to Tibetan Buddhist doctrine, the Dalai Lamas are physical manifestations of the bodhisattva of compassion, Chenrezi (sPyan ras gzigs; Skt. Avalokiteśvara). This bodhisattva created the incarnational lineage for the benefit of Tibetans in particular, but the present incumbent has also become an international figure and gives teachings all over the world.

EARLY LIFE

Tenzin Gyatso (bsTan 'dzin rgya mtsho) was born in 1935 in the village of Daktse (sTag 'tsher; Ch. Hongya Cun 红崖村), a town in Qinghai province with a mixed Chinese–Tibetan population. His mother was Dekyi Tsering (bDe skyid tshe ring), and his father was Chögyong Tsering (Chos skyong tshe ring). He was given the name Hlamo Töndrup (Lha mo don grub). His birth was reportedly presaged by auspicious events including, counterintuitively, a series of misfortunes for his family. Tibetan Buddhists commonly believe that outstandingly good events are often preceded by unusual runs of bad luck. Daktse had suffered several poor harvests, and his family had also experienced misfortunes, including deaths of livestock and a sudden illness that afflicted his father. His parents later reported that while still very young the boy told them that he would one day travel to Lhasa (where the Potala, the main residence of the Dalai Lamas, is located) and played at packing his bags for the journey.

In accordance with tradition, following the death of the thirteenth Dalai Lama, Tupden Gyatso (Thub bstan rgya mtsho, 1876–1933), a group of religious leaders traveled to the sacred lake Hlamö Latso (Lha mo'i bla mtsho), which is associated with the life force (*bla*) of the Dalai Lamas and is guarded by the protector deity Belden Hlamo (dPal ldan lha mo). On a ridge overlooking the lake, they chanted mantras and performed ceremonies designed to provide visions to guide their search for the reincarnation of Tupden Gyatso. These produced an image on the lake's surface of a house with a turquoise roof with a young boy and a dog standing in front. In the sky above, they saw the Tibetan letters A, KA, and MA. These were later said to indicate that the boy was in Amdo, near Kumbum (sKu 'bum) Monastery.

Search parties were dispatched to the region to gather information about boys who had been born recently who might be suitable candidates. A Tibetan government official named Losang Tsewang (bLo bzang tshe dbang) and Kutsang Rinpoche (Ke'u tshang Rin po che), traveling in disguise so that parents would not try to skew the search by coaching their sons, later found a house that corresponded to the one in the vision and a boy who had been born within the possible timeframe. They later reported that when he saw them he demanded to know why Kutsang Rinpoche had his prayer beads. The lama was wearing a string of beads

that had belonged to the thirteenth Dalai Lama, and this was taken as an auspicious sign. Hlamo Töndrup was later subjected to a series of tests, which included examination of his body for physical signs associated with Dalai Lamas such as tiger skin-like stripes on his legs. The most significant tests involved presenting the boy with articles that had belonged to Tupden Gyatso and others that were copies. The boy was able to correctly identify the personal belongings of the deceased lama, and when he was brought to central Tibet, upon entering the Norbulingka (Nor bu gling ka, the summer residence of the Dalai Lamas), he told one of the monks accompanying him that his teeth were in a wooden box he passed. It turned out to contain a set of dentures that had been worn by Tupden Gyatso. Definitive confirmation that the boy was the reincarnation came during a ceremony in which the state oracle Nechung (gNas chung chos skyong) went into trance and stated that Hlamo Töndrup was indeed the correct choice.

Following his recognition, the Dalai Lama was given the traditional scholastic education of the Gelukpa (dGe lugs pa) order, which included study of Epistemology (Tshad ma), Perfection of Wisdom (Phar phyin) literature, Middle Way School (dBu ma) philosophy, and monastic discipline ('Dul ba). This system is based on memorization of textbooks (*yig cha*) that condense material from Indian sources and encode the Gelukpa interpretation of them, coupled with oral debate (*rtsod pa*). Students devote considerable effort in memorization of concise definitions (*mtshan nyid*) of key terms. Their philosophical ramifications are debated, often in courtyards set aside for this purpose.

A core tenet of the system is the Buddhist insight that words and concepts are ultimately misleading and result in contradictions because of the logical implications of terminology. This is true even of Buddhist tenet systems, and advanced students are expected to be able to defeat opponents holding Buddhist positions using the assumptions of non-Buddhist ones. Through this each generation learns for itself the limits of language and reasoning, but also gains a thorough understanding of the implications of Buddhist doctrine. This provides a cognitive map that underlies meditation practice: by memorizing large amounts of canonical and paracanonical material, coupled with succinct summaries of important doctrines and punctuated by vigorous debate, trainees are able to develop a wide-ranging knowledge of their system and its implications, and this provides the basis for both tantric and non-tantric training.

ECUMENISM

As the Dalai Lama asserts, the Gelukpas hold a number of tenets in common with the other orders of Tibetan Buddhism. One is that the philosophical system of Nāgārjuna's (ca. 150–250) Consequentialist Middle Way (dBu ma thal 'gyur ba; Skt. Prāsaṅgika-madhyamaka) is the definitive Buddhist philosophical view. This school's approach to philosophy is based on the insight that words and concepts lead to contradiction; proponents refuse to accept any tenets and instead demonstrate the unwanted consequences of other systems through a *reductio ad absurdum* (*thal 'gyur*; Skt. *prasaṅga*) method of argumentation.

The Gelukpa order also asserts that highest yoga tantra (*rnal 'byor bla na med kyi rgyud*; Skt. *anuttara-yoga-tantra*) is the foremost system of Buddhist practice taught by the Buddha. All Tibetan Buddhist orders regard tantra as supreme, and all hold highest yoga tantra as the ultimate level of tantra, but there are differences among orders on a range of issues relating to both doctrine and practice.[1] All four orders also follow the same monastic code, that of the Mūlasarvāstivāda (gZhi thams cad yod par smra ba) tradition.

Moreover, the Dalai Lama points out that all Tibetan Buddhist traditions have a similar view of the path to liberation. It begins with taking refuge (*skyabs 'gro ba*) in the three jewels (*dkon mchog gsum*: Buddha, Dharma, and Saṃgha), and it requires an attitude of sincere renunciation as a basic motivation. All are also Mahāyāna in orientation, and so the ideal of the bodhisattva is held in common. The motivation for practice should be based on a recognition of the sufferings endemic to cyclic existence (*'khor ba*) and an attitude of compassion for beings caught up in it. One should strive to free oneself from suffering and to do whatever is most effective in leading others to liberation. The training of a bodhisattva begins with the inception of the "mind of awakening" (*byang chub kyi sems*; Skt. *bodhicitta*), the resolution to train for as long as necessary to become a buddha and to work for the salvation of all beings. The Dalai Lama states that there is a high level of agreement among the orders of Tibetan Buddhism with regard to both theory and practice:

> In Tibet, due to differences in the time of translation of texts from India and the development of lineages formed by particular teachers, eight distinct schools of Buddhism arose. Nowadays, four are widely known, Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, and Gelugpa. From the point of view of their tenets, they are all Mādhyamika. From the point of view of their vehicle, they are all of the Bodhisattvayāna. In addition, these four schools are all complete systems of unified Sūtra and Tantra practice, each having the techniques and quintessential instructions necessary for a person to achieve Buddhahood within one lifetime. Yet each has its own distinguishing features of instruction.
>
> (Tenzin Gyatso 1980: 4)

This attitude of ecumenism has characterized his approach to the other orders of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as to other religions. An example is his book *The Good Heart*, in which he comments on passages from the Christian Gospels. He does not diminish the real differences between Christianity and Buddhism, including the fact that the former is based on faith in a creator God, which Buddhism rejects, or that Christianity posits an immortal soul, which Buddhism regards as the most pernicious of all wrong views. But he finds commonality in the ethical systems of both faiths, which he asserts aim to produce people with a "good heart," which includes similar qualities such as compassion, moral behavior, and tolerance (Tenzin Gyatso 1996: 45–47).

The Dalai Lama has also worked to undermine sectarianism among Tibetan Buddhist factions and throughout his life has emphasized what they share in common, in terms of both doctrine and practice. This has been a central concern since his flight into exile in 1959, following which he worked to reestablish institutions that were destroyed and to preserve Tibetan culture and language, which are under attack by the Chinese government. He has spoken against the sectarianism of old Tibet, which led to internecine polemics and sometimes armed conflict. He has reached out to the non-Buddhist Bonpos, who are widely viewed by Buddhists as heretics. In 1988, he participated in a Bon ceremony in Dolanji, India and was photographed wearing a Bonpo ceremonial hat. When other Buddhists questioned his actions, he went even further: he declared that Bon is one of the five Tibetan religious traditions along with the major orders of Buddhism. Much of Bon doctrine and practice have parallels with Tibetan Buddhist schools, and the Dalai Lama seeks to emphasize this commonality and not what divides Bon and Buddhism.

His antisectarian attitude has brought him into conflict with members of his own order. He has publicly urged Buddhists to eschew propitiation of the protector deity Dorje Shugden

(rDo rje shugs ldan), whose mythology includes stories of attacks on other traditions. Dorje Shugden is widely regarded by non-Gelukpas as a malevolent being that works to suppress them, and the Dalai Lama's stance has won widespread approval. Some conservative Gelukpas, however, have publicly denounced him and have accused him or turning his back on the teachers who initiated him into Dorje Shugden practice. Supporters of Dorje Shugden often link this with his overtures to Bonpos and members of other orders and present it as evidence that he is not really a true Gelukpa (or even a Buddhist), but rather a heretic who seeks to destroy the very foundations of the faith.[2] The Dalai Lama rejects the arguments of Dorje Shugden supporters and claims that this entity seeks to shorten his life and creates divisions among Buddhists. Contrary to the often-heated rhetoric of Shugden devotees, he does not use force or coercion to suppress them, but he publicly denounces their practices and doctrines and asks that they not attend his lectures or religious ceremonies because their propitiation of this entity is inimical to his well-being and contrary to his approach to the Dharma.

BUDDHISM AND SCIENCE

The Dalai Lama has also caused concern among conservative members of his order with his approach to Buddhism and science. Like other religions, Buddhism contains doctrines that reflect archaic notions of the workings of the universe and cosmologies that can be disproven by empirical evidence. One example he has pointed out on a number of occasions is the idea (found in sermons attributed to the Buddha and in authoritative scholastic treatises like Vasubandhu's *Treasury of Higher Knowledge* [*Abhidharma-kośa*]) that the earth is a flat disk with a giant peak named Mt. Meru at its center, surrounded by four continents oriented toward the cardinal directions. As he has noted, anyone who flies in an airplane can disprove this cosmology, and for many traditional Buddhists this represents a slippery slope: if the Buddha and Vasubandhu could be so mistaken regarding something so basic, does this undermine the Dharma itself and call into question the traditional Mahāyāna belief that the Buddha was omniscient?

The Dalai Lama says that it does not. Following Dharmakīrti (ca. seventh century), he contends that what is most important in the Buddha's teaching is his knowledge of Dharma; his skills as a geographer are a minor concern. If he correctly identified the causes of suffering and the path to release from it – and if he was correct in his teachings relating to matters of core Buddhist doctrines – then we can confidently accept him as an authoritative person (*pramāṇa-bhūta*; see Jackson 1993). Some of the Dalai Lama's fellow Tibetan Buddhists are not so sure: at a Kālacakra initiation at which he officiated in Sydney in 1996, he began by citing Mt. Meru as an example of why and how Buddhism must adapt its traditional teachings to new discoveries in science. The Dalai Lama's stance is that if something in Buddhism – even a teaching that is well-established and propounded by revered masters or the Buddha himself – is clearly mistaken, it should be discarded and the authoritative scientific explanation accepted. He remarked (in Tibetan) that some of his colleagues disagreed with this approach, and an elderly *geshe* (*dge bshes*, a recipient of the highest academic accreditation in the Gelukpa scholastic system) vigorously nodded his head, indicating that he perceived this attitude as dangerous and misguided.

The Dalai Lama reports that he has been fascinated by science and technology since he was a boy. When Westerners reached Tibet, he often asked them for information about scientific developments, and since going into exile he has sought out scientists and engaged

in dialogue with them. Of particular interest are the pragmatic results of meditation. Practitioners claim that meditation practice has noticeable effects, such as greater calm, compassion, ethical behavior, and patience, and Buddhist literature is replete with claims of miraculous powers attained by advanced practitioners. The Dalai Lama has actively supported empirical research by scientists working together with meditators, and some experiments have verified claims found in Buddhist texts (Goleman 2003; Harrington and Zajonc 2003). He has been an enthusiastic partner with the Mind and Life Institute, founded in 1987 as a forum for exchange of insights between philosophers and religious practitioners engaged in meditation. He explores the ramifications of science for Buddhist belief in practice in *The Universe in a Single Atom*, in which he discusses his engagement with science, particularly quantum physics, cosmology, cognitive science, and genetics. He states that:

> insofar as understanding of the physical world is concerned, there are many areas of traditional Buddhist thought where our explanations and theories are rudimentary when compared with those of modern science. But at the same time, even in the most highly developed scientific countries, it is clear that human beings continue to experience suffering, especially at the emotional and psychological level.
>
> (Tenzin Gyatso 2006: 3–4)

His purpose in writing the book, and for his ongoing engagement in dialogue with scientists and philosophers from around the world, is to identify aspects of various knowledge systems that can contribute to alleviating some of the world's problems and new ways to help suffering beings.

CHINA'S INVASION OF TIBET AND LIFE IN EXILE

While the Dalai Lama was still undergoing monastic training, China began making increasingly aggressive moves toward his country. Following the overthrow of the Nationalist government in 1947 and the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893–1976) announced that the "liberation" of Tibet would be one of the country's main goals. He asserted longstanding Chinese control over Tibet and claimed that it had only become estranged from the Motherland due to the machinations of "foreign imperialists." Tibetans, he claimed, regarded themselves as Chinese and, aside from a few "reactionaries," had a deep love for China and a wish to be reunited with it.

These ideas were contrary to what has been reported by Tibetans who lived during this period – who commonly state that they had no idea that China claimed their country as part of its territory and that they had never even met a Chinese person – and the Dalai Lama's government, the Ganden Podrang (dGa' ldan pho brang), rejected overtures to cede sovereignty voluntarily. Beginning in 1950, Chinese troops massed at the border with Tibet at the Drichu ('Bri chu) River, but the Ganden Podrang failed to recognize the imminent threat. When the invasion began, its leaders were at a picnic and had left strict instructions that they were not to be disturbed for any reason. The aristocrat who commanded Tibet's forward troops, who had no military training and no stomach for a battle with Chinese troops, surrendered without a fight. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) was able to march unopposed toward central Tibet and subsequently set up a government that would officially

rule in tandem with the Ganden Podrang. The Dalai Lama, only 15 years of age at the time, was hastily installed as Tibet's ruler at the behest of the Nechung oracle.

Tenzin Gyatso was placed in a very difficult position: his training had concentrated on Buddhist philosophy, monastic discipline, meditation practice, and other such topics, but he had no experience with politics and little knowledge of the outside world. He had no contacts in China, and despite Mao's declaration that Tibet had always been a part of China, there were no roads connecting the two countries at the time of the invasion. Tibet had briefly been a protectorate of the Qing dynasty (1644–1912) during the early eighteenth century, but as Qing power faded the two countries became increasingly distant until a declaration of independence and expulsion of Chinese nationals in 1912 formalized the separation.

After the initial incursion of troops, the Chinese government ordered that a delegation of Tibetans be dispatched to Beijing, ostensibly to negotiate the terms of Chinese control. When they arrived, they were presented with a document, the "Seventeen Point Agreement for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet," which declared that the region was an "inalienable part of China." The treaty also guaranteed that Tibetan culture and religion would not be harmed and that the populace would have freedom of religion and other rights. The delegation had no plenipotentiary powers, but they were forced to sign with seals manufactured by the Chinese, and they were told that there would be no discussion; the document was a *fait accompli*, no changes would be possible, and a refusal to sign would result in wholesale invasion and loss of life. The Tibetans affixed the seals, figuring that the Ganden Podrang would have the option of repudiating it because it was obviously signed under duress.

As China consolidated control, more troops and government officials moved into the country. The Chinese brought with them a foreign language and customs, as well as an unfamiliar communist ideology. The Dalai Lama tried to cultivate friendly relations with the invaders, but he was increasingly marginalized. Mao adopted a "gradualist" policy and decided to put off wholesale changes like collectivization and suppression of religion, but in the eastern regions of the Tibetan Plateau land was expropriated and people forced into collectives, and religious institutions were destroyed. This led to a refugee problem, with thousands fleeing to central Tibet with stories of repression and religious persecution. Residents of Lhasa feared that gradualism was only a temporary pretext and that they would suffer a similar fate in the future. In addition, the presence of thousands of foreign troops placed a strain on food and resources, leading to hyperinflation.

Matters came to a head in March of 1959. The Chinese military commander in Lhasa ordered the Dalai Lama to attend a theatrical performance and to come alone, with no bodyguards. The Tibetan populace feared that this was a pretext for kidnapping him, and tens of thousands gathered outside the Norbulingka to prevent it. As the situation grew more heated, the Dalai Lama and his advisors decided that matters had become untenable and that there was no possibility of reaching rapprochement with the Chinese. Disguised as a soldier, the Dalai Lama slipped out of the compound at night, accompanied by a few close aides. They were met by guerillas belonging to the growing Tibetan resistance, who escorted them to the Indian border. Unaware that he had escaped, the Chinese military began shelling the Norbulingka, and when they learned that he was fleeing toward India a force was sent to intercept him, but it arrived too late. Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), Prime Minister of India, granted asylum to the Dalai Lama, and within a few years more than 80,000 Tibetans joined him. Land was set aside for the refugees in southern India, and a headquarters was established in Dharamsala, where the main offices of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) remain today.

PRESERVING TIBETAN RELIGION
AND CULTURE

The Dalai Lama initially ratified the Seventeen Point Agreement, realizing that it was the best deal he was likely to get. He hoped that the Chinese would in fact respect religious freedom and allow Tibetans to retain their culture, but from its signing until he fled they violated every provision that placed limits on their behavior. When he began his exile in India he formally repudiated the compact and declared that he would form a government-in-exile, which claimed to be the sole legitimate governing body of Tibet.

The first imperative for the relocated Tibetans was to create the sort of infrastructure that would allow them to preserve aspects of their society that they regarded as of paramount importance. They soon rebuilt the major monasteries of the four Buddhist orders, and Bonpos established a center in Dolanji. The settlements in the south of India resembled miniature versions of Tibetan regions. Each order had its major monasteries rebuilt and staffed by senior lamas who had followed the Dalai Lama into exile. Adherents of each order tended to establish communities surrounding these institutions and, in addition to study and meditation for monks, rituals for laypeople were conducted much as they had been in Tibet.

One major change related to government structure. Pre-invasion Tibet was ruled, at least theoretically, by a succession of Dalai Lamas from the seventeenth century after the fifth Dalai Lama assumed control over most of the Tibetan Plateau. In practice, however, there were interregnum periods following the death of one Dalai Lama and the investiture of his successor, and because several Dalai Lamas died young regents often ruled the country. Tibet lacked a real leader for long periods, and the fourteenth Dalai Lama recognized that this system, while well suited to monastic succession, was unworkable for a government. Shortly after forming the CTA, he and its leaders began a program of democratization. They knew that familiarizing Tibetans with democratic institutions would be a long process and that electoral procedures would be difficult to understand after centuries of autocratic rule by lamas and traditional aristocrats. Classes on democracy were taught in schools, and all levels of government were subject to elections. In 2001, the exiles held the first free and open election in Tibet's history, and Samdong Rinpoche (Zam gdong Rin po che bLo bzang bstan 'dzin, 1939–), a respected religious leader and educator, became Kalon Tripa (bKa' blon khri pa, Prime Minister). He was given a second term in the next election. His tenure ended in 2011, and a third election was held. The new head of government was Lobsang Sangay (bLo bzang seng ge, 1968–), a Harvard-educated legal scholar.

This was highly significant because Lobsang Sangay is not an aristocrat or a reincarnate lama. He rose from humble beginnings and distinguished himself in scholarship and political acumen. Following his election, the Dalai Lama decided that the Tibetan exiles had reached a level of political maturity that would allow him to renounce his political role. The constitution was emended to ensure that in the future he and his successors would be purely religious figures, and none would again wield political power. Some Tibetans were opposed to these moves: for many, particularly members of older generations, it is obviously preferable to have an advanced bodhisattva in charge of affairs, rather than an ordinary human. Nonetheless, the Dalai Lama remained adamant, and he has taken matters even further by proposing that the position of Dalai Lama should be open to elections.

The initial goal of the Dalai Lama and the CTA was a return to independence (*rang btsan*) for his country, but in 1987 he announced a major change of policy. His "Five Point Peace Plan" was presented at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on June 15, 1988. It

contained a number of proposed compromises designed to reignite stalled negotiations with the PRC. He renounced independence and instead asked for "genuine autonomy" for Tibetan-majority areas, in accordance with China's 1982 constitution, which provides for a high level of indigenous control in areas in which a particular ethnic group constitutes a majority of the population. To date no Tibetan has held a position of real power, and the true leaders across the Tibetan Plateau have been Chinese. He further urged the PRC to declare Tibet a demilitarized "zone of peace" in which there would be no military facilities and only the minimum necessary security personnel.

The conciliations contained in his proposal and his declaration that he and the CTA were open to discussions on any issue without preconditions led to his winning the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize. This was celebrated by Tibetans in Tibet and in exile, but the PRC denounced it as a "gross interference in China's internal affairs" and refused to consider his plan. There have been a number of meetings between low-level PRC delegations and representatives of the Dalai Lama and the CTA in the decades since, but China's consistent position is that the only topic on which discussion is possible is the timing of the Dalai Lama's surrender and return to his Motherland to face criminal charges. He is frequently vilified in the Chinese press and by its leaders as a "splittist" (*fenliezhuyi fenzi* 分裂主义分子), indicating that his true intention is to divide the Motherland and make Tibet independent. He is characterized as a brutal despot who craves absolute power, and his renunciation of his political role was denounced as a "trick" designed to camouflage his true intentions.

In spite of his widespread popularity around the world, in China these characterizations are widely accepted. In 2008 I visited an exhibition at the Cultural Palace of the Minorities in Beijing entitled "Tibet of China," which was held in two large rooms. One was devoted to Old Tibet, which was portrayed as "the cruelest feudal serfdom in history," and the Dalai Lama was characterized as its evil overlord. Among a long list of crimes attributed to him, a display claimed that while in power he had a fetish for blankets and sweaters and dispatched armed troops throughout the region to steal them from the populace. No corroborating evidence was given, and it was not clear why a head of state could not acquire blankets by other means. The written materials stated that he hoarded his stolen loot in warehouses where the blankets and sweaters became moldy and were eaten by rats while the populace shivered. None of the Chinese who read these accusations indicated any qualms, and several expressed the opinion that the Dalai Lama's guilt was clear.

This is typical of the sort of rhetoric directed against him by PRC officials and in government publications: he is a sort of Wile E. Coyote villain who constantly hatches nefarious plots but is always thwarted. Citizens are assured that he has no hope of undermining the integrity of the country and that Tibetans remain steadfastly patriotic. A further aspect of the (Communist) Party line is that the Dalai Lama is the "stooge" of foreign imperialists, who use him as a front man for their own schemes to weaken China and then colonize it. Despite the fact that China has the world's largest army and the world's second-largest economy – and so any threat of invasion and conquest by Western powers is farfetched – these ideas are a staple of government propaganda and are widely accepted by Chinese.

In Tibet images of the Dalai Lama are officially banned, and possession of a photo or his writings can result in lengthy imprisonment. In some areas, however, these rules are relaxed. In the Tibet Autonomous Region (which is officially "Tibet" for the PRC), the ban is strictly enforced, but in Tibetan-majority areas in the east of the Tibetan Plateau his image is often displayed in homes and in religious institutions.

The anti-Dalai Lama program began after his flight into exile in 1959 but was significantly ramped up in 1995 following a dispute over the recognition of the eleventh Panchen Lama. The Dalai Lama was prevented from involvement in the search by the PRC, but the abbot in charge, concerned that any choice made without his approval would lack legitimacy, sent information on leading candidates to Dharamsala. The Dalai Lama offered to work in tandem with religious leaders in Tibet, but because the PRC government wanted him entirely excluded, he decided that he had no choice but to make a unilateral announcement. On May 14, 1995, he recognized a five-year-old boy named Gendün Chögi Nyima (dGe 'dun chos kyi nyi ma, 1989–) as the Panchen Lama.

The PRC responded by declaring that the recognition was "illegal and invalid," and the boy was imprisoned, along with his parents. At the time of this writing (2015), their whereabouts remain unknown, and no international agencies have been allowed to visit them. Another boy named Gyeltsen Norbu (rGyal mtshan nor bu, 1990–), the son of Party cadres, was chosen as the official Panchen Lama in an ersatz ceremony that was probably rigged (Barnett 2008). The absurdity of Communist Party members – who are officially atheists and who condemn religion as the "opiate of the masses" and who actively work to destroy it – inserting themselves into the arcane process of selecting reincarnations has been noted by many commentators outside China, but the Party has resolutely asserted its sole right to oversee the *tülku* institution.

Laws promulgated in the PRC since 1995 have extended control over all aspects of recognition and investiture. Any lama who wishes to reincarnate must travel to a Public Security Bureau office, fill out forms, and receive permission from a government official – who is not a Buddhist and who does not believe in reincarnation. Laws announced in 2000 assert Party control over all Buddhist reincarnations, and the language implicitly includes *tülku*s in neighboring countries such as India, Mongolia, Bhutan, and Nepal, all of which have longstanding reincarnational lineages.

The Dalai Lama is deeply concerned about the ramifications of these moves and is working to deny the Communist Party the sort of authority it seeks in regard to religious affairs. As the incumbent, he cites Buddhist tradition, according to which *tülku*s often dictate the circumstances of their rebirths. He states that a valid recognition can only be concluded by qualified Buddhist leaders following traditional procedures:

> Among these some of the most important involve the predecessor's predictive letter and other instructions and indications as to what might occur; the reincarnation's reliably recounting his previous life and speaking about it; identifying possessions belonging to the predecessor and recognizing people who had been close to him. Apart from these, additional methods include asking reliable spiritual masters for their divination as well as seeking the predictions of mundane oracles, who appear through mediums in trance, and observing the visions that manifest in sacred lakes of protectors.
>
> (Tenzin Gyatso 2011)

None of these provisions leaves any legitimate role for non-Buddhist Communist Party officials. The Dalai Lama has stated that he will be reborn and that this will take place outside occupied Tibet. He frequently asserts that a successor will mainly be concerned with the unfinished business of his (or her) predecessor, and it would be impossible to do this in Tibet. He and the CTA have made it clear that a search will be conducted according to established procedures, and the PRC leadership will play no role. Communist Party

officials have also declared that they will use their puppet Panchen Lama to choose a puppet Dalai Lama, but obviously he will have a significant legitimacy problem.

The Dalai Lama has further asserted his authority regarding the future of his institution by declaring that a number of options are possible. For example, he says that his successor could be a woman. As a Buddhist, he believes that he will reincarnate and that his reincarnation will continue his work as a religious teacher, but the Dalai Lama title may not continue. Beginning with the fifth Dalai Lama, his predecessors ruled Tibet, and this is part of their legacy. Now that his future rebirths will be limited to purely religious roles, the title "Dalai Lama" may have outlived its usefulness. Such matters, he asserts, should be decided by the Tibetan people through democratic procedures: if they feel the need to retain the institution, then it will continue, but non-Buddhists, particularly anti-religious Communist Party members whose official goal is the eradication of all religions, should be excluded.

He recognizes the problem that faced the Karma Kagyupas when they decided to designate a child as the reincarnation of their most prominent leader. He told the German newspaper *Welt am Sonntag* (September 7, 2014): "We had a Dalai Lama for almost five centuries. The 14th Dalai Lama now is very popular. Let us then finish with a popular Dalai Lama … If a weak Dalai Lama comes along, it will just disgrace the Dalai Lama."

PRC officials respond to such declarations of authority regarding the present and future of the Dalai Lama brand and of other *tülku* lineages with heated denunciations. The Dalai Lama institution (and the people who are chosen to represent it) is a possession of China, and only Chinese government officials can legitimately determine how it operates and who will be designated as a reincarnation. Both sides have staked out their positions, but the Communist Party stance is much clearer and more inflexible: It will designate a child to be a mouthpiece for its propaganda, and he will be used to bring the restive Tibetan populace under control.

The Dalai Lama has shifted his stance a number of times and has so far declined to make a definitive statement regarding the future of the Dalai Lamas. In 2012 he declared that he will wait "until I'm 100 years old." Even if he does lay out detailed plans for his subsequent lives and the future of the institution, there is little prospect that they will be accepted by the PRC. The period preceding his death will surely see moves and countermoves by the Dalai Lama and the CTA and the PRC government, and when he dies the conflict will be even more intense. For both, the future of Tibet and of its form of Buddhism are at stake.

NOTES

1   The Nyingma (rNying ma) order places "great completion" (*rdzogs chen*) above highest yoga tantra in its system, and the Kagyu order regards "great seal" (*phyag chen*; Skt. *mahāmudrā*) as the supreme mode of practice. Both are regarded by their proponents as nontantric, but they are based on tantric principles and incorporate tantric techniques.

2   See "Six Principal Reasons Why the Dalai Lama Is Not a Buddhist": http://www. westernshugdensociety.org/guest-blogs/the-dalai-lama-is-not-buddhist/ (accessed November 11, 2014).

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CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

BUDDHADĀSA BHIKKHU

——— ·❖· ———

Royce Wiles

INTRODUCTION

The contribution of the iconoclastic Thai monk Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu (1906–93) was primarily as an influential expounder of a reformist hermeneutic intended to reinterpret the traditional teachings of the school known as Theravāda in order to make them more relevant to the day-to-day lives of ordinary lay people (specifically in Thailand) in the modern era. Buddhadāsa also formulated new interpretations of Theravāda doctrines that linked individual behavior with society at large, and so he is widely viewed as a major contributor to "Engaged Buddhism." Because of his lifelong interpretive and arguably innovative agenda, Buddhadāsa also finds a place among international figures as a prominent Asian Buddhist leader at the forefront of the encounter between Buddhism(s) and "modernity" (Swearer 1989: 1; McMahan 2008: 152).

Buddhadāsa's influence mainly relates to his role as a rational and authentic voice from within a specific Buddhist tradition (the Theravāda) who articulated challenges and views (both clarificatory and iconoclastic) as Thailand faced the full onslaught of the modernizing world. Studies have identified forms of Buddhism (especially Zen and Madhyamaka) usually considered external to the Thai Buddhist mainstream as important sources of innovation in Buddhadāsa's articulation of Buddhist teachings (Jackson 2003b). Buddhadāsa's innovations also made him controversial.

Buddhadāsa was influential in expanding public discussion about the interpretation and use of the teachings of the Buddha in Thailand. A member of the mainstream Mahānikāya wing of the Thai Saṅgha, he did not try to build up a political institution to propagate his teachings; he preferred instead to promote and participate in debate and critical analysis, at times revealing a love of confrontation. The development of his thought during his life moves toward an increasing revaluation of political terms to eventually describe a model in which core religious values underpin an ideal society. The center at Suan Mokkh, where he spent much of his life, focuses on the practice of meditation and study of Buddhist teachings, not politics *per se*. Buddhadāsa's syncretic model of Buddhist teachings and political and social analysis (with a favoring of socialist ideals) resonated with what Jackson calls "a persuasive concern across the political spectrum [in Thailand] to ensure that the religion remain[ed] an integral component of the ideology and practice of power in Thailand" (Jackson 1997: 93).

Buddhadāsa's extensive teachings developed and were articulated almost solely in Thai and in Thailand (a maturing Buddhist polity permeated by the teachings, ethos, practicalities and controversies of Theravāda Buddhism with associated theory, practice, and institutions). During his lifetime Thai society – as with much of Asia at the time – was encountering and grappling with new political and economic realities, perhaps more so than any comparable Theravāda-influenced society. Buddhadāsa's responses, which were articulated in his prolific writings and speeches, capture the process of (re)formulation of Buddhism in the developing contemporary world of the twentieth century.

According to Swearer (1989: 2), Buddhadāsa's writings are the "largest corpus of thought ever published by a single Theravāda thinker in the entire history of the tradition." His work can also be seen as a consistent voice of rationality that critiqued and refined established practices and beliefs in Thai Buddhism, all in an attempt to make the teachings more relevant to contemporary practitioners. His was not a purely academic or theoretical reformulation; rather, it represents a reasoned and rational attempt to respond to contemporary challenges.

A major current of the "modern" world (outlined by McMahan 2008: 9–14) has been the interpretation, indeed "construction," of Buddhism as a "product of a unique confluence of cultures, individuals, and institutions in a time of rapid and unprecedented transformation of societies" (p. 5). McMahan only briefly mentions Buddhadāsa in his analysis (p. 152), but Buddhadāsa is an outstanding example of an individual from a profoundly Buddhist society who brought together the currents and trends identified by McMahan as the cross-pollination of Buddhism with modernity. While modern Buddhism in the West is constructed as a *new* paradigm influence, in Thailand the existing paradigm has had to be (at least partially) reenvisioned and re-presented by reformers like Buddhadāsa.

Buddhadāsa has, however, been taken up by a limited number of scholars as a (somewhat rare) Asia-based interpreter who attempted to reanalyze and re-present the Theravāda Buddhist intellectual tradition, which even if only in geographical and linguistic terms can be differentiated from the other surviving main school-complexes (Mahāyāna in East Asian forms and Tibetan traditions).

BIOGRAPHY

The life of Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu has been outlined a number of times in scholarly literature (e.g., Gabaude's comprehensive 1988 study; Swearer 1989: 2–5; see also Ito 2012: 247 n. 1 for a summary of earlier scholarship). The outline here will be necessarily brief. Born in May 1906 in rural southern Thailand, he was named Nguam Panich. He learned to read and write in monastic schools and completed both primary and lower secondary schooling in Chaiya (Surat Thani province, southern Thailand). At the age of 20 he took full ordination and followed the traditional monastic curriculum at Wat Boromathat in Chaiya (McDaniel 2008 provides a review of Buddhist monastic education in Thailand). At this time he was known by the ordained name of Indapañño. Further study in the royal capital, Bangkok, until 1932 saw Buddhadāsa focusing on Pāli, the classical language of the Theravāda Buddhist transmission.

At this point, however, the young monk who would later be known as Buddhadāsa left the capital and returned to the countryside (just weeks before the 1932 "revolution" that brought about a change in Thailand's government from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional one). Rejecting the conventions of monastic life in Bangkok with its rote

learning and the consequent devaluing of innovative or critical thinking as well as perceived compromises in monastic discipline and the allure and comfort of urban life in general, Buddhadāsa returned to the south and set up a forest monastery, Suan Mokkha-balārāma (The Garden (*ārāma*) of the Power or Strength (*bala*) of Liberation (*mokkha*)) or Suan Mokkh for short and took on the name Buddhadāsa (Servant or Follower of the Buddha). At Suan Mokkh Buddhadāsa studied, wrote, and lectured; he also spent considerable time throughout his life sitting in the open air, approachable by anyone for Dhamma discussions, with chickens pecking around him. Suan Mokkh became a place for concentrated practice and still functions as a retreat center and educational establishment.

This break with the Thai Buddhist establishment set the tone for the rest of Buddhadāsa's life. He lived physically and socially outside the established centers of ecclesiastical and political power and influence. The consequences of this move away from the center of political, economic, and religious power in Thailand were far-reaching and influential in the later development of his teachings and his position in Thai society: to a greater or lesser degree, his decision to remove himself from the center of power meant he was not seen as a direct political threat to the government or religious establishment, but instead ranked amongst those ardent monks who live in the forest to practice the teachings of the Buddha: by taking up a position outside both the political and religious power structures, Buddhadāsa was able to critique almost all elements of the Thai Buddhist world and survive (more or less unscathed) during a very turbulent period in Southeast Asian history (see the article by Darlington in this volume regarding how this affected other Thai Buddhist reformers).

The main avowed purpose of Buddhadāsa's new center was to put into practice the teachings of the Buddha: the name Suan Mokkh suggests that liberation (*mokkha*; Skt. *mokṣa*) was a key focus. From this time onwards, Buddhadāsa began to read and, most importantly, to write with critical insight. Buddhadāsa founded a quarterly periodical and began to compose books, some of which found their way into monastic universities. His ideas later came under attack as a threat to the developing status quo, but his remoteness from the scenes of direct political influence seems to have protected him from serious political intervention.

Buddhadāsa's extensive talks and writings (all in Thai) fill seventy-two volumes and range from very short tracts to long works on complex doctrinal topics that reflect his wide-ranging intellectual interests, which strayed well outside the range of orthodox Theravāda Buddhist scholarship. Echoes of elements of other schools of Buddhist philosophy, Christianity, and even socialist thought have been identified in his work (Ito 2012: 3); once again, this shows that Buddhadāsa was an innovative and original thinker focused on interrogating the Theravāda tradition in a radical way, so his intellectual inquiry and writing put him at the forefront of the social and intellectual currents challenging Thai Buddhist orthodoxy.

From the 1933 launch of the quarterly periodical *Buddhism* in Chaiya until the 1970s, Buddhadāsa's stature grew as a cogent, provocative, engaging and lively Buddhist thinker who influenced Thai Buddhist intellectuals. His delight in provoking surprise, intellectual candor, and humor made him a formidable intellectual force in Thai society. For Buddhadāsa, examining individual behavior and action (the focus of Theravāda teaching) necessarily requires an analysis of the world and the natural surroundings with which the individual is connected. During this period too there were challenges and doctrinal confrontations, in some cases with political overtones. By the 1970s Buddhadāsa had become a well-established, influential, and highly visible commentator on Buddhist doctrine and practice

in Thailand. In succeeding years until his death in July 1993, he continued to expand and elaborate his teachings and also turned his attention to the role of women in Buddhism. Because of the large volume of his writings and because they are entirely in Thai, only selections are available in English (some of the most important are listed in the bibliography below): this means that accounts of his thinking (although certainly representative) cannot yet be said to be exhaustive or comprehensive.

WRITINGS

With the proviso that Buddhadāsa's complete writings in Thai have yet to be fully analyzed, translated, or even collected together, Swearer (one of the foremost scholars to meet with him and write about his work) has presented a useful synopsis of Buddhadāsa's thought that, for the most part, accords with core Theravāda assumptions:

> The individual is not-self (*anattā*). As such s/he is part of an ongoing, conditioning process (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) devoid of absolute self-nature (*suññatā*), a process to which words can only point (*bhāsā-dhamma*). This process functions according to universal principles we call nature (*dhamma-jāti*). It is the true (*sacca-dhamma*), normative (*pakati*), and moral (*sīla-dhamma*) condition of things. To [realize non-self] (*anattā*) therefore, is to be void (*suññatā*) of self, and, hence to be part of the normal (*pakati*), interdependent co-arising matrix (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) of all things, and to live according to the natural (*dhamma-jāti*) moral law (*sīla-dhamma*) in a fellowship voluntarily restrained (*dhammika saṅgama-niyama*) by other-regarding concerns.
>
> (cited in Swearer 1989: 6)

This formulation of Buddhist thought has far-reaching implications for individual morality and behavior as well as aspects of social and political theory with respect to "other-regarding concerns" (otherwise not made explicit in Theravāda teachings), notably the concept of "Dhammic Socialism" outlined below, which explicitly presents, perhaps for the first time in Asia, a new political model linked to Buddhist doctrines.

STUDIES

The development of Buddhadāsa's thought can be understood in one sense as an attempt to make the traditional teachings of the Theravāda school (the basis but not the limit for Buddhadāsa's thinking) relevant to contemporary practitioners in Thailand. Questions such as how to live a moral life, the nature of self, the nature of freedom, how one should live in society, etc. are the key topics around which his thinking developed.

Overall, Buddhadāsa's thought is usually viewed by scholars who have studied him as strongly rational and liberal in character, deemphasizing and demythologizing ritual and merit-focused practices that had formed the cornerstone of lay – and to a considerable extent monastic – practice in Thailand. Because of its rational approach and its embrace of "scientific" thought, and because it emphasized the causal role of mental states and was based on broad scholarship of the tradition, Buddhadāsa's commentary on and presentation of Buddhism came to align more with the educated and questioning middle classes in Thailand than the country's rural heartland. The rural classes have much less education, mainly work in agriculture, and have a fascination with superstitions and magic. Moving

away from longstanding and entrenched modes of teaching, Buddhadāsa instead picked up the ambiguities present in Theravāda teachings about cosmology and psychological states: he asserted that heaven and hell realms, as well as divine and demonic worlds, are in fact states of mind and are thus internal and not necessarily external powers that dwell in trees or amulets. He reconstrued the doctrine of rebirth not as a new life after death, but rather a moment-to-moment experience. Moreover, possibly for the first time in Thailand, the traditional teachings of dependent origination were brought into the everyday lives of lay Buddhists. Perhaps most influentially, the abstruse not-self doctrine was interpreted as something that can be approached in everyday life, a need to move away from an existence characterized by "ego" or "self-ness."

Buddhadāsa's desire to remove some of the magic of Buddhist orthodoxy (also discussed by Reynolds in this volume) can be overstated, but it was nevertheless a significant challenge to Thai ecclesiastical paradigms, and this critique provoked responses from both political and Saṅgha hierarchies. Those challenges never succeeded in damaging Buddhadāsa's position, and he was able to survive attempts to make him recant or move closer to traditional orthodoxy.

Buddhadāsa was not alone in his attempts to break down the hitherto exclusively monastic monopoly or dominance of Buddhist praxis. Another such movement can be found in neighboring Burma (which continues to have repercussions both in Asia and internationally), where laypeople are increasingly becoming involved in meditative practices and doctrinal teachings that were historically the exclusive preserve of elite monastics. This was partly a response to colonial influences but also reflected the development of interest in meditation and study among middle class Asian Buddhist communities. As a Pāli scholar, Buddhadāsa was able to translate classical texts into versions educated Thais could read and understand, and so he opened the doors of the classical literature to the laity and began to break down the earlier ecclesiastical dominance of Buddhist discourse. In a recent rephrasing, Swearer identified three major themes in the analysis of Buddhadāsa's work grounded in his exploration of Theravāda thought: (1) nonattachment; (2) emptiness (i.e., not-self); and (3) "Dhammic socialism" (Swearer 2005a: 1072)

NONATTACHMENT AND EMPTINESS

Buddhadāsa's teachings on many doctrinal points offer innovative analyses of conventional and previously unchallenged Thai Theravāda understandings of such concepts as the position of the Buddha and the nature of *nibbāna* (nirvana) and cyclic existence (*saṃsāra*). In addition, his thoroughgoing opposition to mainstream Thai Buddhism's preoccupation with merit-making rituals undermined core activities of many monastic centers (see the article by Osto in this volume). Instead, Buddhadāsa taught that worship or devotion directed toward the historical Buddha is misplaced. Rather than viewing the Buddha and the plethora of minor deities in Thailand as supernatural forces to be placated and cajoled into providing benefits or protection on demand, Buddhadāsa argues against the notion that images and relics are significant sources of boons or fortune; rather, the aim of practice should be achievement of the mind of the Buddha and internalization of the Dhamma. This once again this suggests the influence of non-Theravāda thought, particularly the iconoclastic teachings of some Chan/Zen schools.

As a digression here, it is sometimes difficult for modern readers to understand the change that took place in the closed nature of traditionally "Buddhist" Asian societies.

Access to the teachings of other Buddhist schools was a novelty during Buddhadāsa's formative years. Not only was the scholastic literature of the dominant school, the Theravāda, concealed in a language (Pāli) not widely taught to laypeople, the teachings of the Mahāyāna schools were also not generally available in Thai. In his expansion of the hermeneutic menu, Buddhadāsa confronted core elements of Thai orthodoxy. This questioning of the ecclesiastical paradigms was viewed by his critics as a challenge to political orthodoxy as well, because of the strong link between the ecclesiastical and political hierarchies: Buddhadāsa was seen to be simultaneously critiquing both areas.

With regard to the first thematic area, the Buddhist teaching on not-self (*anattā*) is well-known at least superficially, and Buddhadāsa continually refers to the liberation of the individual from attachment to a self, which he calls the liberated mind or heart (*chit wāng* in Thai). Buddhadāsa's focus tends toward a teaching of freedom from egocentrism, a much more approachable concept than blanket denial of a self. Overcoming selfishness and freedom from attachment to the self are much less radical and more accessible for many Thais than the traditional teaching of *anattā*, which is somewhat counter-intuitive in the way it is presented in Buddhist scriptures. Here we can see the influence of other Buddhist traditions, which were part of his extensive study of Buddhist literature. Concepts like "liberated," "voided," or "freed mind" are more akin to Mahāyāna teachings (specifically the Chan/Zen school; Jackson 2003a: 69) than mainstream Theravāda. These ideas are present but are less important than the concept of not-self. The shift in emphasis that stresses the innate luminosity of the mind devoid of defilements, although found in the Pāli sources, is much more akin to the *tathāgata-garbha* or "buddha nature" theories of the later Mahāyāna (this concept is not developed in the Theravāda; see the article by Duckworth in this volume for further details). The natural corollary of this theory is the idea that the nature of buddhahood is present in all beings; this again is novel for Theravāda Buddhist orthodoxy and is not found explicitly in its traditional teachings.

By making the task of liberating the mind from egocentrism the core activity of even lay Buddhists, Buddhadāsa was countering the entrenched tendency in traditionally Theravāda countries for laypeople to focus mainly on "merit-making" while leaving the actualization of the path to *nibbāna* to monastics. The predominance of rituals (offerings, blessings, deity worship etc.), tattoos, amulets, and other "magical" activities within areas of Thai Buddhist practice has been well-documented; these have been and continue to be a mainstay of much of the Buddhist world in Thailand. Large sections of the Saṅgha were and are heavily involved in this economy of "merit," and significant income is generated by amulets, blessings, and other rites. Buddhadāsa's critique of these practices provided an opening for a shift in focus toward the non-"magical." His reforming push expanded the areas of Buddhist practice and doctrine relevant to individual lay Buddhists, and the increasingly educated middle class responded welcomingly to this reformulation of longstanding practices, particularly since it coincided with a reassertion of resistance to foreign ideas and encroaches by "foreign" Christian influences.

DHAMMIC SOCIALISM

Buddhadāsa was one of the first writers to explicitly interpret the teaching of dependent origination as being directly relevant to an individual's place in conditioned reality – that is, individuals are connected with others around them and the state of the world in which they live. The socio-political implications of Buddhism are at the core of discussions about the

nature of "Engaged Buddhism." "Dhammic Socialism" as set forth by Buddhadāsa is a Buddhist version of a just social order drawing on evidence from the Pāli scriptures (including statements about the models for the behavior of the early Saṅgha) and the earlier history of Buddhism, as well as Marxist concepts and the paradigm of ideal behavior (Ito 2012: 189). Again according to Ito, currents of Thai Buddhist thought were seeking a social model in Buddhist teachings and, through a dialogue between Buddhist thought and Marxism, Buddhadāsa was able to crystallize the results of this analysis in a way that coincided with the emergence of other Buddhist social engagement movements (examples include Thich Nhat Hanh and the 14th Dalai Lama).

In Buddhadāsa's approach, how one should live a moral life and how to pursue the greatest good for the individual necessarily require an analysis of the individual's place in their socio-political and economic contexts and specifically the natural environment. Here he had to tackle another opaque traditional teaching, that of "dependent origination" (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) – which incorporates an analysis of the natural world – linked to the notion of not-self (*anattā*) and its necessary corollary emptiness (*suññatā*).

Only when people go beyond ego-centeredness to move toward a position of appreciating the impersonal nature of phenomena (*anattā*) can they understand that all beings are subject to the same characteristics of the universe: (suffering (*dukkha*) and impermanence (*anicca*). Because everything is conditioned in the same way by the universal natural law of dependent origination, a just society requires that it be dhammically governed. How does this work? The entire natural world is included in Buddhadāsa's view of a just society. The centerpiece of his interpretation of ecological theory is the notion that Dhamma – the way things are as taught by the Buddha, or "the secret of nature which must be understood in order to develop life to the highest possible benefit" (Buddhadāsa 1989a, Lecture One) – is identifiable with nature itself in the most universal sense. The natural order of the cosmos is what humans must comprehend, and their actions must be brought into accordance with it. Using the teaching of dependent origination, it is possible then to link together the human body, human groups in general (i.e., human society), the entire planet, and eventually the cosmos because all operate according to these principles. Identifying Dhamma with nature means that observing and aligning with the lessons of the natural world supplements the traditional understandings of Dhamma: this has been termed a "biocentric spirituality" that allows linkages between Buddhadāsa's formulation of Buddhist teachings with environmental and conservationist agendas (Swearer 2005b: 2628). Buddhist teachings are more anthropocentric than biocentric, but Buddhadāsa's statements certainly contribute toward elaborating an ontological foundation for a "Buddhist ecology."

> The entire cosmos is a cooperative. The sun, the moon and the stars live together as a cooperative. The same is true for humans and animals, trees, and the earth. When we realize that the world is a mutual, interdependent, cooperative enterprise … then we can build a noble environment. If our lives are not based on this truth, then we shall perish.
>
> (cited in Swearer 1998b: 20)

In terms of the effect of Buddhadāsa's lifetime of scholarship and teaching, his influence has been most profound in articulations of Theravāda teaching in Thailand. Thai scholars continue to use his writings at all levels of instruction (in courses for monastics and in secular settings). As an "organic intellectual" who worked within the Thai cultural sphere

but made use of academic currents from outside Thailand, Buddhadāsa is an example of an Asia-based monastic who critically and innovatively challenged and interpreted the Theravāda tradition. His approach, methods, and critiques map well onto contemporary scholarly analyses of Buddhist teachings and, combined with the fact that Engaged Buddhism has come to the fore in many evaluations of current Buddhist praxis, Buddhadāsa will continue to be seen as a key renovator of traditional teachings, writing as he did from a position of authenticity within a major cultural tradition of Asia but with a mind alive to the elements of international Buddhist discourse.

There were numerous controversies during Buddhadāsa's life relating to his outspoken teachings. In some cases reformist elements in Thai politics found an ally in Buddhadāsa's statements, and his carefully phrased critiques were sometimes repeated bluntly without the nuances of his wording. This enabled opponents to intentionally set up confrontations, for example labeling him a "communist" when he advocated setting aside the sanctity of the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha) in order to see clearly the nature of reality. His books were also occasionally burned. Buddhadāsa's political comments were very few, but he was viewed by some as a radicalizing influence, perhaps more so than he really was: younger student radicals, encouraged by Buddhadāsa's resolute challenging of the status quo, were at times enthusiastic supporters, but their very championing of his cause contributed to his reputation as a radical.

In a recent evaluation of "Dhammic Socialism" Zöllner (2014), however, judges it to be a variation of conservative Theravāda Buddhist thought that emerged as the result of demands for reform in Thailand in both the political and religious spheres. He believes that Buddhadāsa has answered the question of the place of democratic principles in Theravāda orthodoxy and that his socio-political thought operated within established parameters.

The most prominent exponent of the ideas explored by Buddhadāsa is the Thai reformist Sulak Sivaraksa (b. 1933), a senior Thai Buddhist and an influential proponent of reform, as well as a controversial advocate for social and political change in Thailand. He is first and foremost a Thai Buddhist and a great admirer of Buddhadāsa's thinking, perhaps regarded more as an agitator for change than a scholar. Sivaraksa promotes elements of Buddhadāsa's "Dhammic Socialism," a demythologized and rationalized Dhamma that rejects both Western capitalism and Marxism (Swearer 2003). In particular, he advocates a total rejection of exploitation of others and reinterpretation of basic Buddhist precepts in order to expand their social applicability. For example, he contends that living in luxury and consuming wastefully are equivalent to taking what is not given, as is participation in activities or structures that perpetuate exploitation of others. Sivaraksa's appropriation of Buddhadāsa's thought is one of many examples of the ongoing and widespread influence of this innovative and original thinker, who was able to navigate the complexities of the traditional religious and philosophical systems he inherited and bring them into dialogue with other intellectual currents within the Buddhist world and in the larger globalized modern milieu. Extensive mining of Buddhadāsa's contributions in relation to the re-examination, and indeed re-casting, of Buddhist thought and praxis is an ongoing process that has yet to be completed.

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